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WILD HYACINTH.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. RANDOLPH,

AUTHOR OF "GENTIANELLA," ETC., ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
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THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED,

WITH MUCH AFFECTION.

"What shall I liken thee unto?
Nought on this earth resembleth thee but 'You'—
Three tiny letters,
Like golden fetters,
Linked round my heart by love as strong and true."

"*A Posie*," *from* "*Poems*" *by* M. ORREN.

WILD HYACINTH.

CHAPTER I.

"No daintie flowre or herbe that growes on grownd,
No arborett with painted blossoms drest
And smelling sweete, but there it might be fownd
To bud out faire, and throwe her sweete smels al arownde."
Faerie Queene.

"By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals."
The Passionate Shepherd to his Love.

It was the last day of April, a lovely day, more like those sung of by the poets than the pitiless combinations of east wind and snow-showers to which we, alas! in these degenerate days are more accustomed. The sun shone warm and bright, the sky was of a soft and tender blue, flecked here and there with fleecy white clouds; the foliage exhibited every shade of green, from the pale, delicate leaf of the beech and the silvery gray of the willow to the deeper tint of the budding oak and the sombre shadow of an occasional Scotch fir. There was little breeze stirring; now and again a gentle air moved among the tree-tops and went whispering away among the budding ferns and brambles; but there was nothing oppressive in the stillness,—it was broken by the murmur of the rivulet, by the note of the thrush, the soft cooing of the wood-pigeon, the song of the nightingale and the buzzing of the bees over the sheets of wild hyacinth that "seemed as if the sky broke up from under-ground."

The "Hyacinth Dell" at Ettrick Hall well deserved its name, and also the admiration so freely lavished upon it. It was a narrow glen in a wood composed chiefly of oak and beech; but on one side, that on which the flowers grew in the greatest luxuriance, the trees were exclusively birch, and

only those who know the difference between the fair "lady of the woods" when growing among other trees, and when seen in the sole companionship of her own kin, can realize how light and graceful the budding birch-grove looked in the April sun. The banks here rose abruptly, showing every now and then a jagged peak of gray rock, while the summit was crowned with a group of old Scotch firs, their red trunks glowing in the afternoon sun.

At the head of the glen stood a gigantic beech, its delicate half-expanded foliage throwing faint shadows on the soft mossy turf that sloped from its base to the crystal brook fringed with daffodils and lilies of the valley. The stream wound through the Dell, forming here a deep, still pool, there a tiny cascade; now loitering on its way half choked with forget-me-nots and blue brook-weed, again hurrying on and forming foaming rapids, till, where a huge oak overhung its mouth, it lost itself in the placid lake, beyond which could be seen a dark belt of woods and a faint blue line of distant mountains. In every direction the ground was covered with the sweet blue flower whence the Dell derived its name; the wood-anemone too grew in profusion, and violets, both blue and white, carpeted the ground under the beech-trees.

On an island in the lake was a small picturesque ruin, half hidden in ivy, the pointed arch of a window catching the golden rays of the fast-declining sun, and the broken tracery standing out clearly defined against the soft blue sky. The air was heavy with the perfume of the flowers, and a species of drowsy spell seemed to hang over the Dell and to affect its sole occupants, two young girls, who, accompanied by a splendid deer-hound and large black retriever, were seated under the beech-tree at the head of the glen.

One, apparently the elder, reclined against a tree-trunk, the scarlet shawl thrown carelessly around her forming a strong point of color in the landscape. She was not strictly handsome, though her face was far from being unattractive. A broad, low brow, with masses of dark hair swept smoothly back behind the shell-like ears and gathered into a large plaited knot at the back, eyebrows too strongly marked and eyes too deeply set for absolute beauty, though conveying an idea of considerable power; a small, straight nose, a finely cut though somewhat wide mouth, and a full white throat,

set like a column on sloping shoulders. Such was the appearance of Christian Ettrick, as she sat under the beech-tree looking out over the blue lake on this lovely April afternoon.

Her companion, who was busily occupied in weaving a garland of hyacinths as a collar for the deer-hound, which that majestic animal contemplated with unqualified disdain, presented a marked contrast. Regarded critically, she could not have been called beautiful, but there was a winsomeness in Hyacinth Ettrick's face that rendered criticism a hard and ungracious task. Her brow, like Christian's, was low and broad; but the brown hair that waved and curled around her face, and fell, unconfined save by a blue ribbon, in careless ringlets to her waist, glowed and almost sparkled in places, as if sunbeams were imprisoned in its luxuriant masses. The eyebrows were both more arched and more delicately penciled than were her sister's, and the large lustrous eyes were of a deep dark blue; the nose, "that disastrous feature," as she herself called it, was certainly *retroussé;* but the mouth was pretty, and the fresh red lips revealed dazzlingly white teeth. She looked two or three years younger than her sister, but such was not the case; for the girls were twins, with but half an hour between them, and were within two days of their twenty-first birthday.

"Christian," said Hyacinth, and at her voice the elder twin started from her reverie, and turned the dark eyes which had been fixed on the sunlit ruin upon her sister's face—"Christian, how can you be so composed and quiet and indifferent? I don't believe you care one straw for all the people who are coming this week, or for all the fun we shall have, or—or anything."

Christian laughed.

"Certainly, Bluebell, I don't care as you do. I think all the people will be strange to us, and we shan't know what to say to them; and they will think us very dull and be bored, and bore us."

"I really don't see why they should find us so dull," said Hyacinth, with a toss of her head. "Come here, Ronald, sir, and have your collar on directly." Then, as the deer-hound stretched himself lazily at her side, she continued, almost petulantly, "You always do talk like that; as if there were something in us different from other people, and that

every one must dislike. I'm sure whenever we do go anywhere —which is very seldom, more's the pity!—people don't seem to think us so very stupid. Why should others?"

"The people here know us," said Christian, quietly. "We have points of interest in common, and know what to talk to each other about, but we have never seen any of these relations who are coming to-morrow; we shall have nothing to say to them, and they will think us stupid and countrified, and wish they hadn't come. You'll see."

"No," retorted Hyacinth; "*you'll* see that they will like us very much—of course they will! Besides, it's all very well to talk of our being countrified—and I know we have never been in London—but I really don't see that we are quite such wild women of the woods as you try to make out."

"We have been brought up very strangely," said Christian. "I know that from things I have heard people say; and we cannot hope to be *au fait* of all the subjects which our London cousins will have at their fingers' ends. Besides, even if I liked the prospect for myself, which I do not, I can't help seeing how nervous papa is. Think, Bluebell! Since mamma died, nearly twelve years ago, not a creature has ever entered the doors of Ettrick but the clergyman and the doctor, and to-morrow we are to be four-and-twenty at dinner! It is a terrible exertion for him, and so he feels it."

"Why does he do it, then?"

"He seems to think it right to take some public notice of our coming of age. I'm sure I wish he would have let it pass like any other birthday. I wish I could guess what it is he is going to say to me to-night."

"Say to you?" Hyacinth looked up inquiringly. "Is it anything particular?"

"Well—yes—at least I suppose so. He told me to come to him alone in the library after dinner. Of course I haven't an idea what it is he wants to say."

"How appallingly it sounds; like the old days of Miss Jackson's reign and never-ending complaints," said Hyacinth, laughing. "'The library' was synonymous with lectures, tears, tribulation, and woe. You generally contrived to steer clear of it, but my reminiscences are far from pleasing. Well, it can't be anything very serious. Something about the entertainment of the guests, I suppose. I do wish, Christian,

you liked the prospect of this week. What else is there you object to?"

"Well—this," answered Christian, slowly, "I know you'll laugh at me, but I don't like all the separations and distinctions. We have our ball, and the tenantry have theirs, and we go in to open it, and to look on for an hour, just as a condescension, and then we do the same for the servants. Then the laborers' dinner—we go and look at them just as people go to see wild beasts fed at the Zoological Gardens, and we give them roast beef and plum-pudding, as if that were quite good enough for them, and——"

"But do you think it is not?" interrupted Hyacinth. "What would you give them, pray? Entrées and champagne? I don't fancy they would at all relish the innovation."

"What I should like would be to have one dinner, and all sit down together."

"My dear Christian, how like you!—and how absurdly unpractical! Just picture to yourself Mrs. Field of Cowslip Farm seated next to Job Thomas the plowman! I believe she would faint or go home. I'm certain she would never either forgive or forget such an indignity."

"And why should she think it one? I might be on the other side of Job: and if I did not object, why should she? If there were any condescension, which I utterly deny, it would be greater on my part than on hers."

"Yes, and therefore a great deal easier. Remember, Job could never cross your path unless you went in search of him, while he rubs against Mrs. Field at all hours of the day. Besides, his awe of you would always be far too great to allow of his being guilty of a familiarity, whereas he might be jocosely disrespectful to the farmer's wife."

"But, after all, Bluebell, you know, we are all equal."

"No, my dear, I don't know anything of the kind. I think potentates, principalities, powers, and all dignities, were very wisely ordained, and I hope they'll last my time. Don't let us argue—you know we shall never agree. I don't want your universal suffrage and universal setting of everything topsy-turvy. The world as it is would do vastly well for me, if I were only allowed to see more of it; and I'm quite contented to be a baronet's daughter myself without repining

that the kitchen-maids are not so likewise. I object decidedly to a division of property; some one else might get Ronald, or my pearl necklace, or my beautiful Bay Charmer; and I'd rather have a nice, handsome husband, very much in love with me, than all the votes in Christendom!"

"And so become a slave and degenerate into a chattel!" said Christian, contemptuously.

"How I should enjoy seeing you in love!" laughed her sister; "all these heroics would soon disappear then, I fancy, and leave you like other people."

"Pray, do you imagine that *you* are like other people?" asked Christian, demurely. "I fancy 'other people' would be somewhat surprised to hear themselves likened to a wild madcap like you."

"Perhaps so," replied Hyacinth, coolly; "let those laugh who win. I enjoy myself tolerably well as it is, and hope to do so infinitely better some day. When I marry, it shall be a hunting man. A winter in Leicestershire is my idea of the acme of all earthly bliss. Now, come along; we came out to have a row on the lake, and it will be too late if we dawdle here any longer."

Christian rose with some reluctance; but Hyacinth was already flying down the glen followed by the dogs, the deer-hound Roland stopping occasionally to endeavor to disembarrass himself of his floral adornments. The boat-house was built against the trunk of the oak which overhung the mouth of the rivulet, and when Christian reached the spot, she found that her sister had already launched the boat, and was seated in it, with the dogs extended at her feet. Christian followed, and they rowed the length of the lake in silence; then, as they rested on their oars, Hyacinth said, somewhat abruptly,—

"Christian, are you not very curious to see our cousin Lindsay?"

"I had hardly given him a thought," said Christian, indifferently. "Why should you be more interested in him than in any of the others?"

"Christian!—why, don't you know that he will be papa's successor?—that some day he must be Sir Lindsay Ettrick? Of course, you must know it. Doesn't that make him rather interesting? Christian, I wonder——"

"Wonder what, Bluebell?"

"Well—whether he will have Ettrick Hall. It would seem so strange—wouldn't it?—to think that at any time it might not belong to us; and yet, you know, properties very often do go with the title."

"Yes, thanks to the law of entail, which is such a gross injustice to women," said Christian. "Hyacinth, you don't often agree with me, or enter into my views; but surely it must strike even you that it would be a positive iniquity if this place, where we have always lived, should be taken from us, and given to a cousin simply because he happens to be a man."

"But are you sure that such will be the case?" asked Hyacinth.

"No; I never even gave the matter a thought till you mentioned it just now. But it is very probable. As if we, who know and care for the place and the people, were not far fitter possessors than a mere stranger, even though he be a man!"

There was a world of scorn in Christian's tone as she pronounced the last word; and Hyacinth laughed as she said,—

"I verily believe you think that men are a superfluous incumbrance on the earth."

"I only wish they could be forced to change places with us for a few years," cried Christian, energetically; "perhaps then it might penetrate their understandings that what we women really want is not to be flattered, and petted, and supposed to be incapable of understanding anything deeper than a fashion-book, or of walking half a mile unescorted, but to be allowed freedom to take our proper place and share of work in the world. Why should it be wrong and unfeminine for us to do anything except dress, and read novels, and play the piano? If they changed places, they would be forced to admit what they now find it so convenient to deny, that our intellects are to the full as keen as theirs, if indeed they are not more so."

"And when this millennium takes place, what *rôle* do you propose for yourself? Are you to be a doctor, or a soldier, or a lecturer? I think the latter would suit you admirably."

"You never can be serious," said Christian, with some irritation. "Your tone showed that you thought all the things you mentioned quite ridiculous."

"Well, truth to tell, I think that the idea of seeing you going off to the wars as a soldier lassie is difficult to contemplate with becoming gravity."

"I never talked of being a soldier—that is the absurd way in which people throw ridicule on a subject which they do not choose to face on its own merits. Of course, physically, men are stronger, and, while war exists, it must be their work; but then if women held their proper place in councils and cabinets, there would be no wars, and——"

"'The kindly earth should slumber, lapp'd in universal Law,'"

interrupted Hyacinth. "Really, we shall be benighted if we stay here much longer. You've sermonized quite enough; and you know your eloquence is completely thrown away upon me. I don't understand one half, and disagree with the other, so keep it till you start as a professed lecturer. Now row down to the end of the lake. I don't want to miss the sunset."

When they had passed the island, with its stately cedar and budding chestnut trees, and swept round a promontory jutting out into the lake, a lovely scene burst upon their view. The setting sun hung like a ball of fire in a cleft between two purple mountain peaks in the far distance. A line of grayish lilac hills melted into a dark pine wood, lit up by the level rays; while in the foreground stood Ettrick Hall, a fine old red-brick Elizabethan building, its many gables and twisted chimneys mantled with luxuriant ivy.

The house stood high above the lake, at the summit of a series of terraces of velvet turf, studded at regular intervals with fine old cedars. The rays of the fast-declining sun formed a pathway of gold upon the waters on which the cedars threw their dense black shadows; while in the east the moon, now nearly at the full, was growing momentarily more and more silvery.

The girls waited till the sun finally disappeared behind the distant mountains, and then rowed silently back in the pale moonlight to the mouth of the Dell. It was a changed scene since they had left it. The hum of the bees, the song of the thrush, the cooing of the wood-pigeon, were all hushed—nothing broke the stillness but the murmur of the rivulet, the plashing of the lake among the reeds, and every now and then

the song of the nightingale. The scent of the flowers was stronger than ever, but the shadows had lost their golden tint, and fell black as ink on the violet-sprinkled turf.

The girls secured the boat, and then stopped to look back once more at the island, where the moon was turning the tracery of the old abbey window into silver. It was a beautiful sight against the deep purple of the evening sky, and Hyacinth, as they turned homewards, began to repeat Sir Walter Scott's description of Melrose.

"How I should like to see it!" she said. "Christian, do you think papa means to keep us immured here all our lives? If he does, it's very hard. I wish we lived in the olden days, when gay young knights seem always to have been careering through the country, rescuing imprisoned damsels. Couldn't you hint at our need of change when you have your fateful interview this evening?"

"Hardly, till I know what its purport may be, which at this moment I cannot even guess."

"It can be nothing excepting about the people who are coming, and yet I don't know why he need fuss about that. Do you remember ever having seen Aunt Marion, Lindsay's mother? Nurse told me to-day she had stayed here once years ago, and was so very fond of you."

"It is more than I was of her, then," said Christian; "it is a very long time ago, for it was when mamma was first ill, and not able to come down-stairs. I wonder you don't remember her, though; you got into her room and ransacked her dressing-case, and——"

"Oh! don't I remember!" interrupted Hyacinth; "what fun it was! I recollect I had rubbed rouge on my cheeks and white stuff on my nose, and had stuck a lot of flaxen curls and plaits on the top of my head, and was admiring myself immensely when she came in. How angry she was! First she boxed my ears, and then she scrubbed my face with yellow soap, and then she dragged me off to the library, and made papa whip me for 'meddling with what didn't belong to me.' She was furious at my having seen all her paints and things! Was that Aunt Marion? I had quite forgotten. But why didn't you like her? You didn't get into hot water too; it was only I who ever did."

"It is so long ago," answered Christian, thoughtfully, "I

can hardly remember why now; perhaps I didn't know then, but I am sure of the fact. I have a sort of dim fancy that I thought she said unkind things about mamma; insinuating that she was self-indulgent, and ought to exert herself more. I can't recollect much about it, but my impression has always been of something like a cat purring."

"And I got the claws," said Hyacinth; "well, I'm not likely to trouble her paint-box now, and she certainly cannot box my ears, so she can hardly do me much mischief. How shall I help laughing, though, if she has flaxen plaits?"

"We will hope that they will be discreetly covered with a cap. But, indeed, Hyacinth, you must try and not be such a madcap; it is all very well with the few people about here, they are used to you, and think no harm of it; but do try not to get the name of being very wild among all these strangers."

"Best, wisest, and gravest of elder sisters by thirty minutes, your commands shall be obeyed whenever I can remember them; though if Aunt Marion's countenance be as demure as I have a vision of its being before she realized the full extent of my enormities, she is certain to provoke me into doing something desperate. And all this brings us back to where we were a long time ago. I do so wonder what Lindsay will be like!"

"By four o'clock to-morrow your curiosity will be gratified. What do you expect to see? A man with two heads?"

"Nonsense, Christian! but you know I've never—we have neither of us ever seen a hero!"

"A what?" said Christian. "Bless us, Bluebell; is it absolutely synonymous in your mind whether a man is called a soldier or a hero?"

"No, no, nonsense!" said Hyacinth, laughing; then in a graver tone, "but you know, Christian, he was in the Maori war."

"So he was. I beg his pardon, I am sure, but I had quite forgotten it. I don't think, though, that it is absolutely necessary to hail him as a second Cœur de Lion because he did shoot some wretched savages."

"It was odious warfare, and wanted plenty of courage, though," said Hyacinth, gravely.

"I dare say, but still it is very different from conquering

civilized troops; there is glory in that, if you please. Think of Alma, and Balaklava, and of Inkermann, where our poor brother was killed when we were tiny babies, too small to remember ever having seen him. I call those battles glory."

"Well, I think there's always glory for a soldier wherever he does his duty," said Hyacinth; "still, I won't insist on Lindsay's being a hero, if you don't like it. Oh! hurrah! hurrah! to think that to-morrow night Ettrick will be full from top to bottom for the first time in my life!—that the night after, and the night after that, and the night after that again, we shall dance! Oh! it is too delightful! Christian, race me to the hall-door. You won't? Come, then, Ronald! come, Sailor!" and away through the moonlight sped the slight, graceful form, her four-footed companions springing up at her in delight, one on either side. But she stopped short of the house, turning aside into the garden; and Christian, following more sedately, found her gathering flowers for her hair, and also the bouquet which for years she had never failed to gather and herself fasten into her father's coat. The dogs, well trained to obedience, lay at the door of the conservatory watching her every movement, but knowing well that this was to them forbidden ground.

At the top of the grand oak staircase the two girls separated to their several rooms—and very different indeed were these two apartments. Christian's looked out over the approach, and up, over pine-woods, to the mountains, and was plain almost to bareness. A small bed, nearly as Spartan in appearance as was the Iron Duke's; no window-curtains; no carpet on the polished oak floor. A plain oak dressing-table, with a small looking-glass, but utterly devoid of the hundred-and-one useless prettinesses of which girls of her age are usually so fond; a large oak writing-table, littered with papers and pamphlets, and looking infinitely better suited to a member of Parliament than to a young lady; and a book-case, containing the works of John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and other cognate writers. Photographs of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Miss Lydia Becker, and various other strong-minded ladies, adorned the walls, and testified to Christian's sympathy with the leaders of the advanced school of advocates of Women's Rights.

Far different was Hyacinth's chamber. It looked over the

green terraces and venerable cedars to the lake and the ruined abbey. The flowing muslin draperies of the bed and window-curtains were lined with deep hyacinth-blue, and confined with broad ribbons of the same color. The clouds of muslin and lace on the dressing-table and looking-glass seemed to invite instant conflagration, and the table itself was crowded with scent-bottles, china figures holding flower-vases, or baskets for rings, or poles for bracelets, and other specimens of *bric-à-brac* too numerous to mention. The writing-table was small, and covered with useless and elegant trifles, but did not appear to be much used. A cage of canaries hung in one window, with a fern-stand below it; a Skye terrier emerged from a Chinese pagoda on the hearth-rug, and gave his mistress a rapturous welcome; unfinished work was scattered everywhere—a delicate piece of embroidery in one corner, a scarcely-commenced piece of lace-work in another, a half-completed water-color sketch in a third. The walls were adorned with colored prints, such as would hardly be expected in a young lady's room, being exclusively hunting scenes; while over the door were suspended a horse-shoe and a fox's brush.

By that brush hung a tale.

CHAPTER II.

> "His child—his Edith—whom he loved,
> As heiress, and not heir, regretfully."
>
> *Aylmer's Field.*

> "Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye."
>
> *Romeo and Juliet.*

It is now time to introduce the reader to Sir Loudoun Ettrick, the father of the two girls with whom he has already made acquaintance. He was a Scotch baronet of ancient family, and inherited from his father a small estate in Inverness-shire, named Glen Ettrick. He had been brought up to no profession, for he exhibited a marked distaste for the one

which his father had chosen for him,—namely the Bar,—or, perhaps, more properly speaking, for the study requisite to enable him to distinguish himself. So he remained at home until his father's death, which occurred when he was about six-and-twenty, and almost immediately afterwards married his lovely but penniless cousin, Ida Grant—a union which had been steadfastly opposed by his father, Sir James, but on which his affections had long been fixed.

The marriage could scarcely be called a happy one. Lady Ettrick, who had never left her Highland home, pined to see the world (presented in such dazzling colors by the novels which were her sole literature), and became querulous and peevish when Sir Loudoun demurred on the score of expense. Small as his fortune really was, it seemed positively illimitable to her, bred up almost in penury; and she persisted in regarding his prudent economy as willful miserliness, and resented it accordingly.

These were hardly the conditions of a happy home, and Sir Loudoun's naturally even, if somewhat indolent, temper soon became perceptibly acidulated. His one comfort and delight was his only child, Harold, and he vied with his wife in the endeavor to spoil him with over-indulgence. It is said of some children that they "cannot be spoilt," and such seemed the case with Harold Ettrick. Indulged in every wish, he still remained docile and obedient, and became, year by year, more and more the idol of his doting parents. Lady Ettrick died when her boy was about twelve years old, and father and son became more than ever all in all to each other.

It was some three years later that Sir Loudoun, gratifying his boy's wish for a holiday tour in Switzerland, accidentally met the lady who afterwards became his second wife. Mabel Vernon was the only child of a wealthy merchant, and was traveling with her father, who was just recovering from severe illness. As he was incapable of much exertion, it became her habit to wander about a good deal alone, more especially in the early morning, and one day, having attempted a more adventurous ascent than usual, in the hope of securing a specimen of the much-coveted "Edelweis," she contrived, in reaching it, to lose her balance and to roll down a bank. The fall was a mere nothing, but the bank was steep, and all her efforts to clamber back into the right path proved unavailing. At this

moment Sir Loudoun happened to pass, at once came to her assistance, and the eager thanks of Mr. Vernon, when he heard of the adventure, formed the commencement of an extremely intimate acquaintance.

When the time came for Harold to return to Eton, Sir Loudoun, instead of accompanying him as he had intended, confided him to the care of a friend, and himself joined Mr. Vernon and his daughter in their leisurely journey towards Rome. Before they had been two months in that city he was Mabel Vernon's accepted lover, and was sharing with her the mournful duty of soothing her father's last hours. The illness from which Mr. Vernon suffered had taken deeper root than the physicians had supposed, and the hopes raised in his daughter's mind by his partial recovery in Switzerland were doomed to prove fallacious. Even before they reached Rome it became clear, not only to Sir Loudoun but to the invalid himself, that his days were numbered, and although his daughter strove hard to blind herself, she could not long resist the same melancholy conviction. When Sir Loudoun announced to the invalid that he was Mabel's accepted suitor, Mr. Vernon expressed the liveliest satisfaction.

"I am thankful," he said, "to leave my precious child in your hands. The thought of her left alone, young and unprotected—for we have literally no relations—and surrounded by all the difficulties and perils which beset an heiress, has sorely disquieted me. One thing I must beg of you, do not insist on her living in Scotland, excepting in the summer months. Her mother died young of consumption, and, well as Mabel seems, the doctors have always impressed upon me that her lungs are delicate, and require care. You will have ample means to live wherever you may choose, for Mabel is my sole heiress, and my fortune is considerable."

Of course Sir Loudoun promised; so deeply was he smitten with Mabel that he would have consented to take up his abode on an uninhabited island, had it been required of him. Mr. Vernon pressed for a speedy marriage, saying he should die easier if he left his darling safe in her husband's arms; and within a month after the ceremony had been performed he passed tranquilly to his rest.

Very deep and sincere was Mabel's sorrow, but her husband's love soon became her sole thought, for it is rare indeed

to find a couple both so devoted and so thoroughly suited to each other.

Mindful of Mr. Vernon's warning, Sir Loudoun, immediately on their return to England, commenced inquiries for a suitable property in a county sufficiently mild to be safe for his wife. It was some time before anything suitable to his views could be met with, but at length an estate called Woodlands, situated in Elmshire, was mentioned to him, and when they saw it Lady Ettrick at once decided that it fulfilled all requirements. A large, convenient, yet not modern house, fine air, mild climate, well laid out and extensive grounds, beautiful scenery, good shooting and hounds within easy reach, there seemed to be absolutely nothing left to desire; so the estate was purchased, and re-named Ettrick Hall, and there, about four years after the marriage, the twins, Christian and Hyacinth, were born; Christian being an old family name in the Ettrick family, and Hyacinth a fancy of Lady Ettrick's, whose favorite spot about the place was the Hyacinth Dell.

Two sons were also born to Sir Loudoun, but both died in infancy. Lady Ettrick, however, had, from the very first, regarded Harold as her own child, and he could hardly have loved her more dearly had she really been his mother. Just before the birth of the twins he had entered the army, and when they were about two years old, Sir Loudoun's heart was wrung by the tidings that his boy's regiment was to sail for Varna in a fortnight. The boy himself was in raptures, and he talked enthusiastically of the glory to be won, while his father's heart sickened with a vague presentiment of evil.

But for a time all went well. The perils of the Varna swamps, of Alma's deadly heights, and of the weary trenches, were alike escaped, till Harold Ettrick's summons came, and he was one of the first to fall in the cold fog of that sad though glorious Inkermann morning. The blow to Sir Loudoun was fearful. A greater affection and *camaraderie* had subsisted between himself and Harold than, alas! often exists between fathers and sons. And, apart from the bitter sorrow for his lost boy, it was a sore grief to him as the years passed away, with no further prospect of an heir, to think that no son of his should succeed him, should inherit the old baronetcy, and the family estate, small as it was, of Glen Ettrick. True, it was but a shooting-lodge, which, to his now more ex-

tended ideas, seemed, in spite of many improvements, both bleak and bare when he went there, though but for a short time for grouse-shooting and deer-stalking; still it was the cradle of his race, and had been in the family for centuries, and he could not bear to think that it and the title must pass away together to his only brother's son. This brother, a soldier, had married the daughter of a country clergyman, and had died a few years afterwards, leaving her with a very small income and two children—Lindsay, his uncle's heir, and a daughter. Sir Loudoun extended considerable pecuniary assistance to the widow. He had known the pains of poverty himself, and was desirous that the boy whom he was forced to regard as his heir should be spared similar struggles.

But some few years after the loss of his son, a still more bitter and overwhelming calamity awaited Sir Loudoun. Lady Ettrick, who had, as usual, accompanied her husband to Scotland in August, tempted by the singular beauty and mildness of the autumn, persuaded him to discard his wonted prudence on her behalf, and to stay longer than usual, in order to enjoy the full glory of the season. Against his better judgment he consented, and laid up for himself a source of never-ending misery and self-reproach. The weather changed with the suddenness so universally characteristic of mountainous regions. One morning all was soft and balmy, the landscape glowing with the gorgeous hues of autumn; the next a thick mantle of snow covered the earth, while the wind roared and howled, driving the drifts before it as if it were mid-winter.

Two days elapsed before they could start, and in those days Lady Ettrick caught a cold. Though somewhat increased on the journey, it yet seemed so slight that no doubt was entertained that the change to the mild climate of Elmshire would at once remove it. Such, however, was not the case. Very gradually, almost insensibly, Lady Ettrick grew weaker, and was more and more teased by a slight but troublesome cough. The physicians whom Sir Loudoun consulted were forced to confess that the lungs were gravely affected, and that the end, though it might be long retarded, was nevertheless certain.

Only one entreaty did Lady Ettrick make: that she might not be sent abroad. She would, she said, far rather die quietly in the home where she had spent the happy years of her married life than be banished to some distant spot, devoid of in-

terest for her husband, and less healthy than their native air for her little girls.

She had her way—for the physicians confessed that the malady was too deeply rooted for change to have much effect. And so, very gradually, and very peacefully, she faded away in the home she loved so well, leaving behind her a prematurely-aged and broken-hearted husband, and the twin girls, aged little more than eight.

From the day of her death, Sir Loudoun had never once left Ettrick Hall, and had utterly secluded himself from all society. For some time he could hardly bear the sight of the children, who reminded him so vividly of what he had lost; but gradually this feeling wore off, and he took considerable pleasure in their society. Christian he soon knew to be far the cleverer of the two, but Hyacinth had her mother's eyes, and many of her winning ways, and, struggle against the partiality as he would, he could not but acknowledge to himself that she was undoubtedly his favorite.

This knowledge had a singular effect. Sir Loudoun cherished a positive terror of ever doing anything in the slightest degree unjust, and this consciousness of his preference for his younger daughter led him, in his fear of showing partiality towards her, to go to the opposite extreme, and to show a favor to Christian that must have rendered a less generous disposition than Hyacinth's deeply jealous. It was not only her own wildness (though that was considerable) that, as she herself phrased it, "always got her into hot water," but Sir Loudoun was so distrustful of himself, so fearful of showing her especial favor, that he listened to complaints of her without such full inquiry as he would have instituted in Christian's case.

The same feeling had influenced him in the disposition of his property. His wife, who was her father's sole heiress, and had had her fortune entirely in her own power, had left it absolutely to him, and the most natural disposition of it would have seemed to be an equal division between the sisters. But Sir Loudoun, morbid in his self-distrust, feared that his wish to do this arose from an undue partiality for Hyacinth, and he had therefore determined to leave Ettrick Hall and eight thousand pounds a year to his eldest daughter, while bestowing on the other a portion of one hundred thousand pounds.

The girls themselves had no idea of their future wealth—indeed, as we have already seen, they were unaware whether or not Ettrick Hall would, on their father's death, pass with the title to their cousin. They did not even know that the wealth which Sir Loudoun enjoyed, and to which they owed the luxury in which they had been brought up, had come to him from their mother; he had never spoken to them on the subject, and no one else was likely to do so—indeed, they did not see many people to tell them anything. Sir Loudoun had lived the life of a recluse since his wife's death, and even his daughters having reached womanhood had made no alteration in his habits. He allowed them to accept invitations to small parties in the neighborhood, but it was not a large one, and for the three years since they had attained the age of eighteen had been even quieter than usual, owing to the three largest houses in the county having been closed for various reasons. Still the girls had had some slight intercourse with their neighbors—enough to make Hyacinth, who was of an extremely sociable disposition, long passionately for a taste of the pleasures and amusements that seemed attainable to all other girls, and to render her a little discontented at times with the unvarying monotony of her life.

It had been a great surprise to both girls when Sir Loudoun first announced to them his intention of having a large party for the celebration of their twenty-first birthday, for, knowing nothing of his intentions respecting their fortunes, they somewhat wondered why that birthday should be esteemed of so much greater consequence than any of the preceding ones as to be kept in such a vastly different manner. Still they were too rejoiced at the fact to question the motive closely; for even Christian, aware how much more secluded was their life than that of ordinary girls, wished for more social intercourse than had hitherto fallen to their lot, while Hyacinth was in a perfect frenzy of delighted anticipation.

When her father had summoned Christian to write the necessary notes of invitation, it was quite a revelation to her to find how many relatives they possessed of whom she had never even heard. Though Sir Loudoun had made playthings of his girls as children, he had not made companions of them as they grew up; it would else have been impossible that they should have known so little about their own family.

It had been his intention to say nothing about the disposition of the property until he presented Christian to the tenantry at their dinner as their future mistress; but it had afterwards occurred to him that the plan might have its inconveniences in the astonishment and embarrassment which the surprise would cause his daughter at a moment when it was of course desirable that she should be composed and self-possessed; he had therefore determined to make his intention known to her the night preceding the arrival of the guests.

As he sat alone in the library, on the afternoon in the course of which we have made his daughter's acquaintance in the Hyacinth Dell, he debated seriously in his own mind whether he should at the same time touch upon another topic, which was to him of the greatest interest.

He had set his heart on the union of his eldest daughter and heiress with her cousin Lindsay Ettrick, his successor in the baronetcy, and in the possession of the family estate of Glen Ettrick. This plan had for some years occupied his mind, and was one of the reasons why he had always manifested a disinclination to allow his daughters to enter much into society. Several of his relatives had offered to chaperon the girls in London, if he would confide them to their care for a season; but he had always courteously declined the offer, without even telling his daughters that it had been made. Lindsay had always been quartered somewhere remote from the metropolis, and he did not wish that Christian should become intimately acquainted with any other man before she met the one whom he destined to be her future husband. That she should have any objection, or indeed any opinion at all, on the subject, never once entered his mind; he had not the faintest conception of the very advanced views she cherished. Lady Ettrick, his ideal of female perfection, had been everything that was sweet, gentle, and charming, but had certainly never been troubled with either views or opinions; and since her death he had seen no one, and had little idea of the rate at which the world had progressed. Perhaps, if he had known some of Christian's opinions respecting social equality and the division of property, he might have paused before endowing her with the possession of Ettrick; and if he had heard her contemptuous designation of matrimony as the "degradation of becoming a slave and chattel," he might not

have felt quite so secure as to her acquiescence in his wishes respecting her cousin.

It never occurred to him, either, to doubt the young man's ready concurrence in the project. Fifteen hundred a year was the very outside calculation of the fortune that would accrue to him from Glen Ettrick, on his accession to the baronetcy; it was then hardly probable that he would refuse the offer of Ettrick Hall and eight thousand pounds a year, even though a wife formed part of the condition.

Christian was not an absolute beauty, and her father was not inclined partially to magnify her charms; still he proudly thought that the young man might travel far without finding a maiden either so good-looking or so well dowered. It may seem strange that he had not sooner had the young man at Ettrick, but he considered twenty-one as quite young enough for a girl to marry, and had such an untroubled conviction that his scheme must succeed according to his wishes, that he had not disturbed himself by taking any measures to insure success. Had the tidings been brought to him that his nephew was about to marry any one else, he would have felt both injured and aggrieved, but it never occurred to him that such an event was eminently probable.

All through the lovely April afternoon he sat with his book upon his knee, but his eyes fixed upon the lake, meditating whether he should say aught to Christian of his wishes respecting her cousin. At first it seemed to him that it would be best to do so; but afterwards he wavered. Suppose, the idea for the first time occurred to him, that he did not like the young man when he arrived? Such a thing was most improbable, every one spoke well of him, still undoubtedly it was possible; perhaps it would be wiser to wait and see. Then too came the thought that there would be a certain awkwardness in preparing Christian to receive a husband who was as yet profoundly ignorant of the advantages in store for him. Yes, it would certainly be better to wait till he had seen and spoken to Lindsay, or perhaps it would be wiser still to broach the matter first to Mrs. Ettrick.

Sir Loudoun felt a shyness that surprised himself at the thought of proposing to the young man the arrangement that seemed to him so natural and so simple, and hailed with considerable satisfaction the idea of his mother's intervention.

He was not sure that he had a very pleasing recollection of his sister-in-law; he had not seen her for more than thirteen years, and might have forgotten, but he thought he retained an impression of a cold and disagreeable manner, and of a tendency to saying sharp and unpleasant things. Well, it was a long time ago, perhaps he had forgotten; at any rate she could but be pleased at the prospect of so satisfactory a settlement in life for her son. He must leave the army, of course; it would never do for Christian to follow the drum, and be perpetually moving from one country quarter to another.

Well, Lindsay was nearly thirty now, and had seen enough of the world to be ready to settle down quietly. He would give up Glen Ettrick at once to the young couple; he had never visited it since the fatal autumn when it robbed him of his wife, never having been able to bear the thought of it since; and it was very fitting that the future baronet should live at the old family place.

And so Sir Loudoun lay back in his chair, and watched the sun set, and the moon rise over the lake, while he complacently built castles in the air, and calmly disposed of the lives of two young people, with never a thought of their views of the matter; after the time-honored manner of elderly persons, who, having enjoyed their own youth to the full, invariably forget that their children may possibly wish to enjoy theirs, and consider them monsters of ingratitude for not unhesitatingly accepting the dull and colorless lives mapped out for them.

Dinner at Ettrick that night would have been a solemn and silent meal, had it not been for Hyacinth. Sir Loudoun was never very talkative, and was still thinking about his nephew; besides feeling decidedly nervous and uncomfortable at the thought of the change which the morrow would bring into his quiet life. Christian was marveling more and more what her father could possibly want with her. He talked a little about arrangements which he wished made during dinner, so the private interview could scarcely be about them, and she felt fairly puzzled.

But Hyacinth's spirits were irrepressible. At every moment some fresh feature of the pleasures to come rose before her, and inclined her to shout and sing for joy. It was not then to be wondered at that she found it hard to confine her delight within decorous bounds. From the moment when she

had pinned the delicate bouquet of heath and maiden-hair into her father's coat, she chattered almost incessantly; and it was only when, as they left the dining-room, Sir Loudoun said, "I shall expect you in half an hour, Christian," that she remembered the interview that was so evidently weighing on her sister's mind. But, after a few exclamations of curiosity as they entered the drawing-room, she reverted to her pleasurable anticipations—speculating on the appearance which the room would present the very next evening, on where the different guests would be seated, on what they would be like, and which of the party they should prefer, till she was recalled to the present moment by seeing Christian rise to leave the room as the stable-clock struck half-past nine.

Christian was greatly inclined to loiter as she crossed the hall—she felt a species of presentiment that something of consequence, and not altogether of a pleasurable nature, was about to be confided to her; but she conquered the inclination, and walked direct to the library. Sir Loudoun was sitting by the window in the moonlight, and motioned to her to seat herself opposite to him. There was a minute's pause, during which she could distinctly hear the beating of her heart, and then he said,—

"Christian, I have sent for you now to tell you something which it may perhaps be better for you to know before the public announcement of it is made at the dinner on Wednesday—I shall introduce you to the tenantry as their future mistress."

The full meaning of this piece of intelligence did not, however, at once dawn upon Christian, and her only answer was,—

"Then Ettrick will not go to our cousin Lindsay?"

"To Lindsay!" exclaimed her father, in surprise. "How could that be possible, when it belonged to your mother?"

It is always difficult for elderly persons to understand that what is clear to them is not necessarily patent to their juniors.

"I did not know that," replied Christian, quietly. "Then, if it is ours, Hyacinth and I can always live here. I am so glad!"

"I don't think you understand me," said her father. "I said nothing of Hyacinth—she will have her fortune, of course; but what I wish to convey is, that I make you the 'eldest son,' and heiress of Ettrick."

There was a long pause. Sir Loudoun concluded that his daughter could hardly realize her good fortune, and was almost paralyzed with astonishment when she said,—

"Papa, I am really very sorry. I hope you will change your mind. Primogeniture always seems to me a mistake and an injustice, even when the heir is a son. Why, from the mere accident of being born first, should he be made rich, while his brothers and sisters, who have been brought up in the enjoyment of the same comforts and luxuries that he has, and who have an equal claim to the fortune, are left poor? But it seems even more unnatural to make such a distinction between twin sisters. Hyacinth and I have always been equal all our lives; why should any difference be made between us now?"

Sir Loudoun sat still, struck absolutely dumb. A steady, consistent Tory of the old school, his daughter's opinions appeared to him rank socialism, and he was fairly appalled at the coolness with which they were enunciated. It was evident that they were by no means the passing fancy of the moment, but of considerably longer growth, and he felt proportionately disturbed by them. If he had known before—perhaps—he might—but there! it was too late to think of it now. His determination had been taken, and his will made, fully five years before; his speech, introducing his daughter to the tenantry, lay, carefully revised, in his desk—it was too late now to change. Besides, these strange notions would soon be shaken out of the girl's head when she married; and the thought of the marriage on which his heart was set proving a relief to his mind, he at length answered,—

"My dear, I don't suppose you know what nonsense you are talking. You have got hold of a few fine words, of which, very probably, you hardly know the meaning, and think you are saying something very grand and wise, because you don't understand it. I am not likely, I should hope, to change my mind for any such nonsense. As I said before, I shall introduce you to the tenantry on Wednesday as their future mistress. Do not disturb yourself about Hyacinth; she will have a very handsome fortune. But estates should not be divided; and your husband will like you none the less for having a fine estate and eight thousand pounds a year."

"I shall never marry," said Christian, calmly.

"So girls usually say," replied her father, "and yet the majority of those who get the chance invariably do so."

"I shall not," persisted Christian. "I will never degrade myself by becoming any man's slave, or submit to lose my own name, to which I have as good a right as a man has to his. It is a fitting symbol of the wicked injustice of men to women that they should require them to give up their names."

"They give them another," said her father.

"Yes—as a badge of servitude, like the serf's collar in olden times," said Christian.

"I begin to think your aunt Marion is right," said Sir Loudoun, with a sigh, "and that I have been to blame for keeping you here without any young companions. It must be too much solitude that has turned your head in this extraordinary manner, and made you talk all this wordy nonsense. I am really very much pained, Christian, to find you full of such absurd crotchets. However, I hope this week's gayety will do you good, and make you more like other people. I wish you to tell Hyacinth—by the way, does she share your eccentric views?"

"Oh no; she always laughs at me," said Christian.

"I am thankful to hear it; it is a comfort to know that one child has some sense." Sir Loudoun, like many of us when disturbed, was waxing somewhat cross. "Well, I wish you to tell her of my intentions, and to give her this," touching, as he spoke, one of two large parcels, apparently boxes covered with white paper, that stood on the table beside him, "and take the other yourself. They are directed, so you cannot make a mistake. They are your poor mother's jewels, which I have divided as I think proper between you. The night of the ball here, however, I wish you to wear the diamonds which belong to the title, and are an heirloom in the family. That is all, I think. Now you may go; and pray forget your absurd theories as fast as ever you can."

Finding herself thus dismissed, Christian took the parcels and returned to the drawing-room.

"Well, what was it? What a time you have been! What are the parcels?" cried Hyacinth, springing up from the piano and flying to meet her.

Christian sat down, and narrated what had occurred as succinctly as she could.

"You the heiress! How glad I am!" cried Hyacinth. "Poor papa! I don't wonder at his being frightened at your queer fancies. Do try to get rid of them, Christian. You see nobody likes them better than I do. And now for the jewels. Give me my box. Oh! what loves! Do look at these diamonds!—how very, very beautiful! Why, I declare you haven't opened yours yet! Let me. What splendid rubies! But how odd!—you have no diamonds at all. Surely we must have made a mistake. No; this is directed to you all right. Do you think papa made a mistake? Hardly probable. Never mind—we will change; you shall have some of mine."

"No, no," said Christian. "Papa said he had divided them as he thought proper; and you know I don't care the least bit for jewels. Now good-night, Bluebell. It isn't bed-time, but I want to be quiet, and think."

The reader will divine that Sir Loudoun had purposely given her mother's diamonds to Hyacinth, believing that the family jewels would descend to Christian as Lindsay's wife.

CHAPTER III.

"My poverty, but not my will, consents."
Romeo and Juliet.

THE morning express was about to start from a London terminus, and at the window of one of the carriages sat a lady in a state of visible disturbance, looking anxiously out on to the platform, and evidently expecting some one. There was the usual bustle and the state of breathless confusion that seems chronic at every large station; but gradually this subsided; guards examined the tickets and porters slammed the doors; the lady's face grew momentarily more anxious. She was a slight, pale woman, who looked no particular age; at first sight most people would have called her pretty, but would probably have reconsidered their verdict when a closer inspection had enabled them to observe the singularly thin lips

and cold greenish-gray eyes. Her hair, which was very fair, was elaborately arranged in the height of a somewhat fantastic fashion, and her dress, though quiet, was handsome.

At length, at the very last moment, when the bell had rung and the guard stood ready to give the signal of departure, her countenance brightened as a young man rushed on to the platform, followed by a breathless porter with a portmanteau. There was no time to lose; he sprang into the carriage, and the train started almost before the door was fairly closed.

"Really, Lindsay," said the lady, leaning back and gently fanning herself, "really, I had quite given you up. I do wish you would be more punctual; it shakes one's nerves terribly!"

"Trains shouldn't start so precious early, then," said Lindsay Ettrick, with a careless laugh; "only ten o'clock now, and I wasn't in bed till after five!"

"After five! what could you have been doing?"

"Dancing with the new beauty, Miss Adair, at Myrtleshire House. She really is lovely, and no mistake. I say, mother, it's an awful bore being dragged away from London just as it's getting pleasant, merely to help to drink the healths of two bread-and-butter misses! Can't you get me off staying more than two nights?"

"Certainly not," replied his mother, "nor would I do so if I could. Listen to me, Lindsay. Ever since your uncle has made it so very clear that he will never marry again, I have had my eye on these two girls. We shall, I presume, know in a day or two how their mother's large fortune will be divided; the one who has the lion's share must be your wife."

"My wife! why, she may be as ugly as sin!" exclaimed Lindsay; "besides, I haven't the least intention of marrying for many a long day. Freedom is more precious than you seem to think, mother."

"Nevertheless, it will have to be as I say," replied Mrs. Ettrick, coolly; "if you were to succeed your uncle to-morrow you would have barely fifteen hundred pounds a year, and you must be as well aware as I am that all your tastes are decidedly expensive. As to freedom, that is a mere phrase. Young men with plenty of money seldom allow matrimony to be much of a *gêne* to them in these days."

"I decidedly forbid the banns if the girl is plain, though," said Lindsay. "After having been a devoted adorer of beauty

all my life, I should expire at the very thought of an ugly wife."

"Pshaw! Nonsense!" said his mother, contemptuously, "as if *les beaux yeux de la cassette* were not better worth looking at than any others, once the honeymoon is over. However, make your mind easy on that score. I have seen the photographs of both girls, and without being absolute beauties, they seem rather above the average in point of looks. Besides, Lindsay, you know very well that, talk as you please, you must marry money, and that soon. I know more of your embarrassments than you perhaps imagine."

"Well, some ready money would be remarkably convenient, I don't deny that; still, selling one's liberty for it is awfully hard lines. Heiresses always are so preternaturally uninteresting."

"I have always failed to comprehend," answered his mother, coldly, "why it should be a matter of conscience, as it appears to be with many men, to assert that the mere fact of a girl's possessing the only thing in the world worth having renders her an uninteresting person. For my part, I do not see that girls with fortunes are necessarily either plainer or stupider than their penniless neighbors. But even granting that they are so, what does it matter? Their attractions *last* when beauty has faded and intellect palled on your taste."

"Bless us, mother, you are waxing quite eloquent!"

"Because, Lindsay, this matter is of serious consequence. These girls have been brought up as recluses, and have as yet seen no one. You will enjoy the advantage, as such a near relation, of becoming speedily intimate with them. Depend upon it there will soon be plenty of people in the field; it is everything for you to have this start."

"I can hardly do very much, though, at best, between Tuesday and Saturday—eh, mother?"

"I have not the least intention that we should leave on Saturday. I know we are only asked till then, but we must so play our cards that the invitation may be extended, and that we may not leave Ettrick until the deed is done."

"Mother, I must protest. You surely don't expect me to go philandering about the woods, playing Corydon to my cousin's Phyllis, when, apart from all the London fun, there's Epsom to be thought of. It's hard enough lines missing the

Two Thousand by coming to this stupid place this week, but Epsom!—no, that's more than a fellow can stand!"

"As you please, of course," replied his mother, taking up the *Times*. "I should have imagined it to be worth while to give up a race for one year, to be enabled to enjoy that and every other whim and fancy in comfort for the rest of your life; but doubtless you know your own affairs best. I am sorry, however, I did not know your views before. I should hardly have undertaken this long journey, and given up several pleasant engagements, without some strong motive, such as the wish to see you safe from the danger of an enforced sojourn at Boulogne, which, from something you said the other day, must, I imagine, be imminent. However, of course it is your own affair. I shall not interfere again." And Mrs. Ettrick settled herself in her corner, and became apparently absorbed in her perusal of the *Times*.

A close observer might, however, have noticed that from time to time she cast a glance at her son, as if to watch the effect of her remarks, and might have surmised that her absorption in the news of the day was rather assumed than real. Her son was evidently much disturbed; he changed his seat several times, looked out of each window, tried to whistle, and finally attempted to read, though, as he held his paper upside down, it was fair to conclude that he was not very deeply interested in its contents.

He was tall, slight, and decidedly good-looking, with a clear, dark skin, considerably embrowned in exposed portions by the sun; his hair (which, in spite of its being, according to the military fashion of the day, cropped almost as close as a convict's, showed a strong disposition to curl) was intensely black, as were his eyebrows and moustache. "A very good-looking young man," he would have been pronounced anywhere, though physiognomists might have taken exception to the forehead, which, though high, was narrow, and have predicted a certain vacillation of character from the lines of the slightly receding chin. It was difficult to tell with certainty the color of his eyes, for the long black lashes cast a deep shadow; but when seen in a strong light they proved to be like his mother's, of a cold, greenish gray.

At length his indecision came to an end, and, throwing down his paper, he exclaimed,—

"Well, mother, I suppose, after all, it must be as you say, though it's enough to make one hate the girl if she were perfection itself. Still, as you say, it's better than Boulogne, and it must precious soon come to that if something doesn't turn up. You say you've seen the photographs. I devoutly hope it's the best-looking that has the money."

"I should think, unless Sir Loudoun takes some crotchet into his head, the fortune would be divided, and you could take your choice. With the admiration you always express for tall and stately damsels, I should think the eldest, Christian, would suit your taste best. She looks clever, and——"

"That's a bore! A clever woman is always a nuisance!"

"I don't know. A woman may as well be able to take care of herself occasionally, I think. Besides, it would save you the trouble."

"Oh! I don't want her to be an absolute fool; but a clever woman has always got opinions, and will explain them to you, and argue about them, and give you to understand that she knows better than you do. I could never live with a clever woman!"

Mrs. Ettrick smiled. She was well aware that there were few women cleverer than she was, who could manage the people with whom they came in contact or could turn all circumstances to their own advantage so dexterously as she could. Yet no one had ever thought of calling her "a clever woman," and her son, who had profited the most by her talents, was probably more ignorant than any one else of her claim to the title. She did not enlighten him, however, and the conversation passed to more general topics, and to surmises as to the party that was that afternoon to assemble at Ettrick.

Considerable, meanwhile, was the perturbation of the two young hostesses, to whom the thought of company at home seemed almost incomprehensible. In her ordinary frame of mind Christian would have taken the matter very quietly, and have been quite contented with hearing from the housekeeper that all was in readiness; but her father's unexpected announcement of the night before had quite bewildered her, and she was besides much disturbed by the coldness with which he had greeted her at breakfast-time. For, truth to tell, Sir Loudoun was feeling too nervous at the change about to break in on the routine of his life, to enable him even to appear

to ignore Christian's strange opinions enunciated the evening before; the dismay he felt, when his thoughts reverted to the subject, caused his manner to appear stiff and cold; and Christian, whom, in his terror of unduly favoring Hyacinth, he had always apparently made his favorite, felt the change in his greeting acutely. Hyacinth sprang up to him at once, in a whirlwind of delight at the contents of her jewel-box, and her flow of lively chatter proved an inestimable boon and relief to both her companions. But, breakfast over, Sir Loudoun turned to speak to his eldest daughter on necessary business. There were, first, the directions as to which carriages were to meet the various guests; and when these had been duly arranged, he gave her a paper on which was clearly written the order in which she was to send the guests in to dinner, and advised her to study it carefully, that there might be no mistake; after which he betook himself to his usual morning's avocations in the library.

Christian departed for her necessary and somewhat protracted interview with the housekeeper; and on her return found Hyacinth deep in the study of Sir Loudoun's table of precedence.

"Give it to me, Bluebell. I may as well learn the odious thing at once, as it has to be done. Let me see. I wonder why papa has given me Lindsay? I should have thought some of the older men were of more consequence. It's a pity you shouldn't have the hero!"

"Oh! bother——don't tease!" was the answer from Hyacinth, whose cheeks were scarlet, and who seemed greatly disconcerted. "I didn't know,—you never told me that Mr. Lambert of Stanham was coming to dinner."

"Did I not?" said Christian, carelessly. "You know I wrote all the cards in the library with papa, and I dare say I forgot some of the names. But we don't know him; why should you care? and why are your cheeks so red?"

"Oh! nothing. Never mind," said Hyacinth, hastily; "let us see who falls to my share. Mr. Walter Graham, one of the people in the house—a cousin, is he not?"

"His mother was sister to papa's first wife," said Christian. "Now I think I know my lesson; hear me, Bluebell, and see. All right? That's a comfort; if only I don't get nervous and forget!"

Hyacinth betook herself to her own room, and walked up and down it in a state of considerable perturbation. This appearance upon the scene of Mr. Lambert of Stanham, the master of the Elmshire Hounds, was most perplexing to her. Sir Loudoun kept horses for his daughters, and greatly encouraged their riding as much as possible, but, as they had no escort, hunting was of course strictly forbidden. Now, partly perhaps because it was forbidden, and partly from her being an exceptionally good rider, it was the supreme desire of Hyacinth's life to ride to hounds. It had chanced one day, during the past winter, that she had persuaded her father to allow her to ride alone—Christian having a cold, and the groom being ill—assuring him that nothing could by any possibility happen either to her or to Bay Charmer. Sir Loudoun had made some difficulties, but had at length consented, and she had started, certainly without the least intention of getting into mischief. But it had so happened that, after riding some distance, she suddenly found herself in the centre of a group of horsemen who were watching the hounds draw a gorse covert in the field below.

Of course she ought at once to have turned, but curiosity got the better of her, and drawing a little away from the group, she remained watching also, disregarding, or rather not observing, the inquiring glances turned towards her. Even then she had no thought of joining in the run, but suddenly the hounds gave tongue; there was a view-halloo at the bottom of the covert; the sportsmen near her threw away their cigars and leaped the low fence out of the road into the field, and before Hyacinth well knew what had happened Bay Charmer had settled the matter, and had carried her mistress well to the front.

Once there, Hyacinth's blood was up, and she never once reflected that she ought to stop, or how annoyed her father would be. She was well accustomed to jumping, for it was her habit to take every leap she could when Christian, who preferred quieter exercise, was not out with her. And it was well she was so, for the fox took a difficult line of country, and the field soon became extremely select. The run, though brilliant, was short, and at the end of it, when Hyacinth's only thought was how to get home as quickly as might be, what was her dismay to find the young master, cap in hand,

standing before her, begging her acceptance of the brush. Between her embarrassment at the situation, and her delight at receiving such a trophy, she never quite knew what she said. All that she could recall was that she had hastily declined his proposition of having the brush properly mounted for her, had evaded his implied inquiry as to her name, and had galloped off with scant courtesy, hoping that, as she had seen no one she knew, her escapade would remain undiscovered.

She had never contemplated anything so dreadful as meeting him, and now here he was absolutely coming to the house! What should she do? She had never even told Christian of her adventure. What should she say if Mr. Lambert recognized her, and alluded to their former meeting? Perhaps he would not know her again; but even as this idea entered her mind, she felt that it was a broken reed, not to be relied upon. She looked up at the brush, of which she had hitherto felt so proud, with a species of loathing. How well she remembered the exultation with which she had placed it over her door when the under-keeper's son, to whom she had confided it on her way back, had sent it home properly mounted; now she felt as if she could willingly burn it, if only by that means she could consign the whole of that day's proceedings to oblivion.

It may seem strange that Christian should never have observed the novel ornament in her sister's room; but the girls' tastes were so widely divergent that, fond as they were of each other, they seldom entered each other's apartments. Hyacinth shrugged her shoulders at Christian's bare floor, and laughed at her formidable array of pamphlets and dull books; while Christian stood on the threshold of Hyacinth's room, and professed herself afraid of coming any farther, for fear of knocking down some precious piece of uselessness. So even when, at rare intervals, she did come in, her eyes were too much occupied in avoiding the destruction of Dresden sheperdesses, or the overthrow of tiny tables, for them ever to rise so high as the top of the old carved oak door.

The luncheon-bell rang before Hyacinth had found any way out of her dilemma, and she went down in anything but her usual radiant spirits. Sir Loudoun, however, was too nervous at the thought of the rapidly-approaching ordeal, and Christian too absorbed in thinking over all the duties of her posi-

tion, for either of them particularly to notice her very unusual silence.

It had been arranged that Mrs. Ettrick and her son should reach the Hall about an hour before the rest of the guests, so that their aunt's presence might be of some support to the two girls in the trying ordeal of receiving their first party. It seemed a perfectly interminable period between the time when the omnibus was dispatched to the small station just outside the lodge gates, and that when it was heard rapidly approaching the hall-door. Sir Loudoun, who had been wandering restlessly from one room to the other, went out to the door, the girls following him to the hall, where they were speedily overwhelmed by their aunt's effusive greeting.

Mrs. Ettrick's manner could be extremely winning when she chose; and, as the reader may infer from the conversation with her son, which he has already heard, she did choose on the present occasion. Seated in the drawing-room, and bestowing her honeyed speeches impartially upon each, she was all the while critically examining her two nieces. She at once acknowledged that, the photograph notwithstanding, Hyacinth was without a doubt the best looking, her expression and coloring being such as no photograph could portray. Still, Christian pleased her best—she seemed so quiet and composed, so ready to be placed at the head of a household as a sensible wife. But glancing at Lindsay, she plainly saw which sister his fastidious taste preferred. He was regarding Hyacinth with a look of critical approval that boded ill for his falling in love with Christian, should she prove the better match of the two. However, Mrs. Ettrick sagely reflected that it was of little consequence that he should fall in love at all, all that was necessary in her eyes being that he should remain strictly neutral till Sir Loudoun's intentions were declared, and then marry the richest of his cousins as soon as might be.

Sir Loudoun's manner surprised and pleased her. In former days he had not been very cordial towards her. She had occasionally spoken slightingly of Lady Ettrick's illness, and in his eyes she could hardly have been guilty of a more deadly sin. Now, however, he was not only cordial, but almost *empressé*. Of course it might be partly shyness and nervousness, but that could hardly account for all; besides, his wel-

come to Lindsay was quite affectionate, almost paternal. Could he be about to play into her hands, and also wish for the union of the cousins? It really seemed very like it. For as the other guests arrived, she observed with infinite satisfaction that, though genial to all, to none was his greeting so warm as it had been to her and Lindsay. If her surmises were correct, here was a great stumbling-block removed from her path, for she had somewhat dreaded that Sir Loudoun might desire a better match for his daughter. Her spirits rose, and she became more and more interested in hearing all the plans and arrangements for the week, and more anxious to assist the girls by taking the entertainment of some of the visitors off their hands. She was accustomed to being extremely popular whenever she chose to take the trouble to make herself so, and had no doubt that the twins were perfectly charmed with her. She might have been somewhat disconcerted had she heard what passed in Christian's room when the last visitor had been conducted to her apartment. Hyacinth looked in for a moment before dressing, and, after a few remarks on the other guests, said,—

"By the bye, how well you described Aunt Marion! She is just like a purring cat."

"Yes. I thought of it once or twice. Do you recognize the flaxen plaits?"

"I think these must be a new set. But I do remember her eyes. Once when she was pleased there came a gleam in them, which I recollect quite well seeing that day when papa gave in and consented to punish me. We shall never be friends, I know."

"I believe you bear malice still."

"Nonsense! But there's the dressing-bell."

CHAPTER IV.

"Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?"
Hero and Leander.

CHRISTIAN looked so stately and composed that probably, among the many guests assembled at Ettrick that night, not one guessed how her heart beat as she entered the drawing-room, or imagined her state of nervous trepidation at the thought of committing some social blunder in her new character of hostess. She was first—so much the better, she should have time to look once again at that perplexing list, which seemed so persistently to elude all the efforts of her usually retentive memory. But she was not destined to have much time to con her lesson, for in a very few minutes she was joined by Mrs. Ettrick.

"I thought perhaps I might be of some little use to you, my love," she began, in honeyed tones. "All this must be so new to you; and my long experience may be of some assistance."

"Oh! thank you very much, Aunt Marion," said Christian; "but papa has made out the list of how every one is to go in to dinner, and I have only got to learn it; but that seems quite impossible—it goes out of my head as fast as I read it."

"Don't worry yourself about it, my love—just read it out—no one will be at all surprised, for they must know that, from unfortunate circumstances, you have had no practice in such matters. And so your father wrote the list? Very thoughtful of him. Would you mind my seeing it? Thanks. Ah! I see—most excellently arranged indeed!"

For at the first glance Mrs. Ettrick saw Lindsay's name in the post of honor as escorting Christian, and drew pleasing deductions therefrom as to what Sir Loudoun's views must be.

And now the first stragglers of the party in the house began to make their appearance, and Mr. Wilson and his two elderly sisters were announced. Mr. Wilson was the rector

of the parish, and had known the two girls from their earliest childhood. More guests made their appearance, but still there was no sign of Hyacinth. Sir Loudoun asked Christian more than once why she was so late, but she could give no reason. She little knew that Hyacinth was standing at the top of the stairs, dreading to enter the drawing-room and face the possible recognition by Mr. Lambert, and, by the position she occupied, sorely discomfiting a troop of ladies'-maids, anxious to establish themselves in good places to see the procession to the dining-room.

At length, however, the dinner-bell rang; the evil moment could no longer be postponed, and, with a rush that gave her no time to think, Hyacinth flew down-stairs, and entered the drawing-room, where, without daring to look up, she devoted herself, in the most *empressé* manner, to the two old Miss Wilsons, whom she habitually voted "terrible bores," and who were somewhat surprised at her sudden attention. The butler announced dinner; the moment of Christian's penance was come, and with blushing cheeks she commenced her task. She had forgotten Mrs. Ettrick's wise counsel to read her lesson instead of trying to remember it, and before half the couples had been dispatched she was in hopeless confusion. Hyacinth, to her dismay, saw her cavalier disappear with some one else, and a moment after found herself crossing the hall on the arm of Mr. Lambert of Stanham. But she was destined to be soon reassured.

"I think this is not quite our first meeting, Miss Ettrick," began her companion; then, seeing her vivid blush and air of extreme confusion, he continued—"I suspect, however, that for some reason your day's hunting is a secret; if so, you may depend on my discretion."

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Hyacinth, giving him a glance of such rapturous thankfulness as was an ample reward for his promise—"thank you so very much. I never meant to hunt when I came out, but I fell in with the hounds, and I could not resist looking on, and Bay Charmer jumped the fence before I knew where I was, and—and——"

"And you could not resist going on when you had once begun. I do not wonder. To any one who rides so well as you do it must have been a desperate temptation. But why should it be such a secret?"

"I ought to have told, I know," said Hyacinth, coloring; "but I knew papa would be very vexed, and as it was an accident, and would never happen again, I—I said nothing."

"Sir Loudoun objects to your hunting, then?"

"Yes; he does not go out himself, so we have no one to go with. Christian does not care, but I would give anything in the world to go out every day of the season."

"Your mare is a great beauty."

"Yes—is she not?" cried Hyacinth, enthusiastically—admiration of Bay Charmer was a ready passport to her regard. "She will jump anything in the world and never tire; she never showed that day's run one bit."

"Then she must be a wonder, for, though so short, it was at almost racing pace. You do not go out very much in the neighborhood, do you, Miss Ettrick, or we must surely have met before?"

"No, we hardly ever go anywhere, more's the pity," said Hyacinth, who felt on terms of the greatest intimacy with her new acquaintance from their common secret, and her thankfulness to him for keeping her counsel, and was innocently unaware of the bewitching character of the glances she was bestowing upon him. "Two tea-parties and one croquet ditto would represent a very gay summer, and a dinner at the rectory at Christmas is wild dissipation."

"What a dismal life!"

"Oh, no, it isn't that at all. We ride a great deal, and row, and fish, and——"

"And sing, I am sure."

"Why?"

"Because nothing would convince me that you did not."

"Well, I do a little, but in a very mild way, when I'm quite sure that no one is listening; and even then only scraps of songs—chiefly odds and ends of old ballads."

"Which are worth double all the bravura songs in the universe. I wish you would consider me 'nobody,' and let me listen. There is no music of which I am so fond."

"Except that of the hounds, *bien entendu*," laughed Hyacinth, as the ladies rose.

Christian and Lindsay had hardly prospered so well. They had no secret to act as a bond of union between them; Christian's mind was considerably preoccupied, and Lindsay, some-

what bored by her short answers, was watching Hyacinth's animated countenance and evidently mirthful conversation with her neighbor, and wishing himself in that neighbor's place. The only time that Christian initiated a topic of conversation, it was by asking what were his views on the subject of female suffrage; and when he told her that he thought women had no business with votes, and made a great blunder when they attempted to step out of their own sphere, she had responded, with a calm smile, that she supposed it was only natural that, like the rest of his sex, he should be prejudiced, and disposed to resist the yielding of long-withheld justice.

Good heavens! If this was what his mother called a clever girl, he—should prefer her being some one else's wife. After all, it seemed most probable that the girls, being twins, would have equal fortunes, and the younger looked much the pleasanter—as if she were full of fun, in fact. She certainly was uncommonly pretty. He fancied his mother had said that they knew no one; but she and that fellow beside her must clearly be old friends, or they could not have so much to say to each other. He wished cordially that they were not on quite such intimate terms. Perhaps his mother was mistaken after all in imagining that he had so clear a field as she evidently had done. That red-bearded fellow opposite looked as if he were making tremendous running, and the girl seemed to like it. She certainly was monstrously pretty! He had not admired her sufficiently at first. There was something very distinguished-looking in the shape and turn of her head; and although that way of wearing her hair curling down her back was affected and *outré*, still it was undeniably becoming. Then he noticed, with approval, that she had very pretty hands, set off by some remarkably handsome rings (Hyacinth was in the full enjoyment of wearing, for the first time, some of the contents of her jewel-box)—and good hands were a point in a woman's appearance on which he was most fastidious. He glanced at Christian's, and found that, though soft and white, they were decidedly too large for his taste. He should think her gloves must be seven and a half, at the very least. He began to wish that he could hear what all that merry conversation was about; he had made up his mind by this time that Hyacinth was a positive beauty.

There is, perhaps, nothing which so quickens a man's ap-

preciation of a woman's perfections as to see them openly admired by another; and Lindsay's inclination to fall in love with Hyacinth was decidedly increased by a desire to supplant what he supposed to be his rival, by a slight spirit of opposition to his mother (who evidently preferred Christian), and by a very considerable alarm at that young lady's determined sentiments.

Mrs. Ettrick was watching matters closely, though appearing absorbed in conversation with Mr. Walsham, who had taken her in to dinner, or with Sir Loudoun, whenever he turned to her during a short pause in Lady Tynedale's lively chatter. She felt that Christian had, in some manner, wounded his taste or his susceptibilities, and she noticed the frequency with which his eyes were fixed on Hyacinth. This did not please her. Though she knew nothing of Sir Loudoun's intentions respecting the property, she thought it very possible that he might make Christian heiress of Ettrick; and if such were the case, it would be suicidal folly for Lindsay to begin to fancy himself in love with the younger sister. Happily, however, that young lady appeared to be already provided with an adorer, for Mr. Lambert, amused by Hyacinth's *naïveté*, and delighted with her utter want of conventionality, was paying her very marked attention. Had she known the extent of their acquaintance, Mrs. Ettrick would have been scandalized, and would have felt inclined to bestow upon her niece some marked reproof for her "want of maidenly reserve"; but being in blissful ignorance on the point, she was rather pleased than otherwise with a flirtation that accorded so well with her own schemes.

When the ladies reached the drawing-room, there was, for some minutes, considerable formality; but this could not long exist where Lady Tynedale was. Lady Tynedale was a pretty, vivacious, good-natured woman of five-and-thirty—good-natured, that is to say, to those who were what she considered "genuine"; for to shams, or, indeed, to any form of disingenuousness, she showed no pity, but scourged them with the full force of her ready wit.

It may be therefore easily understood that she had many enemies, for in these days shams are largely in the ascendant, and their proprietors are rarely inclined to forgive exposure. Well-preserved ladies, whose rouge and pearl-powder, whose

lip-coloring and hair-dye, had been unmasked by Lady Tynedale's raillery; girls who had hugged themselves in the belief that the jonquil-colored tow into which, in a fit of temporary insanity, they had transmogrified their brown or ebon tresses, was supposed to be genuine—"Titian-colored hair"—till Lady Tynedale undeceived them; manœuvring chaperons, who, like ostriches, hiding their heads in the sand, believed their manifold plots unknown because no one ever gave a hint of perceiving them, and who had been roused to a sense of the transparency of their artifices by Lady Tynedale's outspoken remarks—all these disingenuous classes, and many more besides, feared, and therefore hated her.

There is no passion so cruel as is fear, and very cruelly and very bitterly did Lady Tynedale's enemies often speak of her. Happily, her character and her circumstances were such that she could afford to laugh at their impotent malignity. Married before she was seventeen to Lord Tynedale, a man of forty-nine, and surrounded, courted, and flattered as she had been ever since, her character had ever stood so high as to resist all her detractors' efforts to blast it. Though she had married out of the school-room at her mother's bidding, she had proved herself a pattern wife, and although those who wished her ill might, and did, sneer at her very large masculine acquaintance, she could, had she chosen, have replied with truth that they were quite as much her husband's friends as her own.

It is rare, indeed, that a marriage so vastly unequal in age as that of Lord and Lady Tynedale turns out so well, more especially when the bride is so exceedingly young; it is generally a disappointment to the elderly husband, who, marrying for the sake of a nurse, is selfish enough to wish to chain a bright, joyous child, who should be gathering the roses and sipping the nectar of life, to his gouty chair—and is little short of a purgatory to the young girl who has married without knowing what life is, or without a conception of what it is she is undertaking, and wakes to find herself tied down for the best years of her young life to a round of duties in the service of one whom she has married from obedience rather than love.

But the Tynedale marriage had proved a brilliant exception to the general rule. It would have been strange if the fair young bride had remained untouched by the chivalrous de-

votion of her handsome husband. Her lightest wish was his law—so much so, indeed, that she soon grew most guarded in expressing a desire, so certain was she that, no matter at what cost to himself, it would at once be gratified.

His indulgence had its reward, for it would have been difficult to find a more adoring wife than was Lady Tynedale, in spite of the gay spirits and the love of society and diversion which made her enemies shake their evil heads and whisper, "Poor *dear* Lord Tynedale! *So* sad for him! *Such* a frivolous wife!"

Lord Tynedale was wise enough to know the contrary, and to value the treasure that he possessed. He alone knew the numberless acts of unobtrusive kindness done by his wife—not only the common and easy ones to the very poor, the legitimate objects of charity to every Lady Bountiful, but of that infinitely more difficult class requiring tact and thoughtfulness of no common order, alleviating the sufferings and relieving the poverty of those who have known better days—who, while they suffer as much as, if not more than, the absolute pauper class, have the additional torture of dreading, as a humiliation, the discovery of their pressing necessities. He knew her thorough truthfulness—that it was not in her nature to have a mystery or a secret, however small, of her own, yet that nothing could induce her to betray the very slightest confidence reposed in her. He loved to see her courted and admired, and was content that she should have any number of adorers in her train, well assured that never a thought would enter her mind that need render him uneasy. In fact, he had a noble mind, and was capable of that rare and precious thing, perfect trust.

And Lady Tynedale amply returned his confidence. She would repeat to him all the compliments that were paid her, and laugh merrily with him over their foolish exaggerations, in a manner that would have been keenly mortifying to their authors, could they have overheard her. Two boys at Eton, and two girls in the school-room, were the delight of their parents' lives, and promised to inherit both their dispositions and good looks.

It was but seldom that Lord and Lady Tynedale were to be seen apart, and he was to have been one of the party assembled at Ettrick Hall, but a premonitory twinge of the gout

had made him deem it safer to remain at home, though he would not hear of his wife's keeping him company, and thus missing the gathering of her kin.

"Not to be thought of, my dear Helen," he said, when she urged it. "I am most anxious to hear all about the twins, and shall expect a very full report. Ethel will keep me company beautifully. It will do the monkey good to come and read with me a little."

And so Lord Tynedale's excuse had been sent, and it was in his place that Mr. Lambert had been invited to dinner.

Wilfred Lambert had not long been settled in Elmshire. He had inherited the fine, though sadly encumbered estate of Stanham, from a distant cousin; in the previous autumn, and had not liked to give up the hounds which had always been kept there, though they were an expense he could but ill afford. Every one always talked of the Lamberts of Stanham as rich people, and forgot to mention the encumbrances, though they were as well known as was the rent-roll; and it requires considerable determination and strength of mind, on the part of a young man who has just come unexpectedly into a fortune, to resist the assumption of a whole county that he will do certain things eminently convenient to it, and by no means unpleasant to himself. He had succumbed for this winter, but he had made strong resolutions, and had now gone the length of announcing that he could hunt the country no longer. He had almost made up his mind to let Stanham and go abroad, and had never felt a pang until this evening; but now it suddenly began to dawn upon him that Elmshire was by no means an unpleasant place, that it would be infinitely better for the property, and indeed more advisable in every way, if he stayed quietly at home. He could shut up the greater part of the large rambling old house at Stanham, and live in one corner of it; and though he could not afford to keep the hounds, he might have a "couple of screws," and see a little sport.

And all this revolution had been made in his views by Hyacinth Ettrick's blue eyes, though no one would have been more surprised than she, had she been told of the change she had wrought, excepting, perhaps, her victim himself.

As Wilfred Lambert drove home that evening, although conscious that he felt different from usual, it did not dawn

upon him that this change of feeling was produced by his having fallen violently in love with the pretty heroine of the Swampmore run.

It is much the fashion, we know, to scoff at "love at first sight," and to aver that it is only to be found in the pages of romance. From this view we must, however, be permitted to dissent, for we believe that love is to the full as often generated at first sight as after long acquaintance, more especially, strangely enough, in the sterner sex, who are popularly supposed to be so much less impressible than their weaker sisters. We doubt whether it would be possible for any one to explain distinctly and precisely *what* it is with which he or she falls in love; they are conscious of the fact, but would be sorely puzzled to give the exact reason. It is, then, just as likely to be inspired at first sight by admiration of some special attribute, particular beauty, or remarkable grace, or by the subtle attraction of some sympathetic affinity, as to be the outcome of long acquaintance, which is, we think, more often productive of warm friendship than of intense love. Certain it is that at the dinner-table at Ettrick, Hyacinth, herself unscathed, had done damage to two hearts. Wilfred Lambert, albeit the cause was unknown to himself, was, as we have seen, already altering his scheme of life under her inspiration; while Lindsay Ettrick was secretly determining that, let his mother advise as she might, it was the younger sister that he would try to win.

How much the perception that he had a rival in the field had to do with this determination it would be hard to say; no man values a woman the less for seeing that she is appreciated by another—with some it is indeed a substantial ground of preference. He took care to usurp the seat by her side on entering the drawing-room, and was gratified by perceiving Mr. Lambert's look of decided disappointment. It made no difference to Hyacinth; she was so supremely happy in the enjoyment of this totally new phase of existence that she could not restrain her spirits, and would have chattered away to old Dr. Wilson with almost as much pleasure as to any one else.

Christian was far from enjoying herself so thoroughly; her avowal of her views on female suffrage had alienated Lindsay, whose conversation had previously interested her; and she

had been much annoyed by her neighbor on the other side, a second cousin, by name Captain Gordon, who had overheard her speech, and who had teased, or, as he would have termed it, "chaffed" her about it during the rest of dinner.

Ralph Gordon was extremely poor, and had come down to Ettrick with the positive determination to marry one or other of his cousins, he was not particular which; indeed, he would cheerfully have allied himself to any woman, however ill favored, were she only sufficiently endowed with golden recommendations. His heart, if he had one, was perfectly free in the matter, and it struck him forcibly that he had better devote himself to Christian, as Hyacinth's greater beauty was sure to attract more worshipers. But, though unaware of it, he made the greatest possible mistake in his method of approaching Christian; he imagined that by teasing her about her fancy for a vote, and by making jokes about all the absurdities and inconveniences to which female suffrage might give rise, most of which were resuscitated from his recollections of *Punch*—he was making great progress, and putting himself on a footing of perfect familiarity. He little knew how deeply Christian cared for her opinions, or guessed how impatiently she was beating her foot against the floor and longing for the moment when she could give the signal for departure. He had a very comfortable belief in his own powers of pleasing, having been much flattered, on account of his good looks, by many silly girls in various garrison towns; and had he been told that he had both annoyed and disgusted his hostess, he would simply have disbelieved it. When the gentlemen entered the drawing-room he found her quite unapproachable, securely intrenched between Mrs. Walsham and the eldest Miss Wilson, and no effort he could make would induce her to move from their protection. Hyacinth did much more of the honors of the house; she it was who discovered that Miss Mackenzie was a brilliant pianist, and only required the regulation amount of pressing to be induced to favor the company with some of Thalberg's most stupendous fantasias, and that Lady Tynedale sang delightfully *espiègle* little French songs, besides dreamy German ballads. Then it also appeared that Lindsay had a fine though uncultivated tenor voice, and that if some one would but accompany him he would like nothing better than to delight his audience with "La Donna è mobile,"

and "Com' è gentil;" so, as Miss Mackenzie's performances were of far too magnificent a character for her to condescend to attempt an accompaniment, Hyacinth, with many warnings to her cousin that it was her first essay, sat down to accompany him herself, and certainly acquitted herself to the full as well as he did.

Altogether it was a strange alteration in the girls' lives, and Hyacinth followed Christian into her room to talk it over when they went up-stairs. But Christian was even more silent than was her wont; indeed, she seemed positively depressed, and responded but feebly to Hyacinth's merry chatter.

"Are you tired?" asked Hyacinth at last.

"N—no; not exactly."

"Then what is the matter? Have you lost your tongue?"

"No, but—it seems a hundred years at least since we got up this morning, before we knew all these people. Oh, dear! how I wish this week were over!"

"*I* don't! I should like a dinner-party every night, and people always staying in the house! Come, Christian, you're only tired. Confess, now, is not Lady Tynedale perfectly fascinating?"

"I should think she was good-natured, but she seems very frivolous."

"Frivolous! Stuff! Do you think no one knows anything who is not always talking of the abstruse subjects that interest you? Good-night; I hope you will be in a cheerier mood to-morrow."

And Hyacinth departed, humming as she went the refrain of one of Lady Tynedale's chansonnettes.

"To-morrow! To-morrow!" murmured Christian, as she knelt at the open window, her arms resting on the sill, and her face upturned in contemplation. "How I wish it were over! or rather how I wish that my father had made a different disposition of the property! It is so wrong, so unfair to Hyacinth, so positively iniquitous to my mind! And little as I know of the world, I know enough to be aware that, as heiress of Ettrick, there will be men in plenty who will want to marry me—not for what I am, but for what I have. Well, it can't be helped, and I can't be forced to marry. How women can be found willing to submit themselves to all the indignities to which, as wives, they are naturally subject,

passes my comprehension. To say nothing of being forced to give up their own names, which seems to me the grossest possible insult, fancy having no legal right to call anything their own! it is absolutely monstrous! Sometimes, though, an heiress's husband is obliged to take her name instead of his own; that is fair enough."

And with this curiously irrational conclusion, Christian betook herself to repose, little dreaming that Ralph Gordon, smoking his cigar in the drive, had been studying her face with the rays of the moon falling upon it, and was at that moment engaged in preparing some complimentary verses to greet her eyes at her awakening on the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

"Silence, ye wolves! while Ralph to Cynthia howls,
And makes night hideous;—answer him, ye owls."
Dunciad.

"But then she had a will: was he to blame?
And maiden fancies."
The Princess.

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks!"
Hamlet.

"Now let us hear everything we are to do to-day," exclaimed Lady Tynedale at breakfast the next morning; "of course I know there is the great solemnity of the tenants' dinner, but is there nothing else? It's quite hopeless to think of settling to anything, so I hope there's some other festivity."

"What enviable spirits!" lisped Mrs. Ettrick, who had hated Lady Tynedale ever since she had once heard her refer laughingly to Eau de Phryne, a cosmetic in which she indulged largely and placed the most implicit confidence. "One would think, dearest Lady Tynedale, that you were as young as Hyacinth."

"Instead of being nearly old enough to be her mother," laughed Lady Tynedale, who would not have cared had her

age been placarded from Charing Cross to South Kensington. "Well, a coming of age is new to me, and I want to take a lesson before my boy's time comes. Christian! Hyacinth! recite the programme of the day!"

"There is nothing else, excepting the children's tea," said Christian, speaking with an effort. She felt thoroughly disturbed and off her balance this morning, hating the thought of all the congratulations which her father's announcement of her as his heiress would be certain to bring upon her; very angry at the lines signed "Ralph," and addressed to her as "Cynthia," which had reached her that morning from Captain Gordon, and in which sentiment and raillery were mingled (as may be conceived, when we say that "moonlight on the hill" was made to rhyme with "John Stuart Mill"), and much annoyed at finding him established next to her at breakfast, and offering her those matter-of-course civilities that she was unable to refuse.

Lindsay had contrived to get next to Hyacinth, and was making her laugh heartily by a mirthful forecast of the events of the day, while his mother looked on, not best pleased, and wished he would devote himself to the quiet, sedate Christian instead of to "that pert little thing."

"The children's tea!—the school-children, I suppose you mean?" said Mrs. Mackenzie.

"Yes, of all the schools on the estate," said Hyacinth.

"Of all the *Church* schools I presume you mean, my love?" corrected Mrs. Ettrick.

"No, I mean what I said—*all* the schools, Dissenting, Roman Catholic, and everything else."

"Surely this must be a jest?" said Mrs. Ettrick, turning to Sir Loudoun; but before he could reply Christian exclaimed,—

"A jest? No, indeed! Do you think we would show a mean and pitiful party spirit, and exclude the children of those who do not happen to think precisely as we do? What should be free if thought is not? And on what subject have people so good a right to think independently as on their religion, which affects themselves, and no one else? Besides, what signifies the difference of a creed, so long as people do whatever they think right to the best of their ability?"

There was a dead silence when Christian ceased, and as it

suddenly occurred to her that she had made herself unnecessarily conspicuous, she subsided into an agony of blushing, which was not lessened by her overhearing Captain Gordon's *sotto voce* remark of—

"*Brava! Bravissima!* fair cousin, Stuart Mill is bearing fruit with a witness!"

He was making what he considered, and would himself have called, "strong running," thinking that here was a country girl, who had as yet seen no one, and who could hardly fail to be captivated by such a professed lady-killer as himself. As we have said, he had been greatly flattered, on account of his good looks, by the not over-wise young ladies who in garrison towns regard flirtation with the officers as the sole end and aim of life, and was inclined to assume a sort of "*veni, vidi, vici*" manner, most distasteful to one so proud, despite all her socialistic fancies, as was Christian Ettrick. She was thankful to be able to give the signal for moving to the drawing-room, and thus to escape for the moment from her persecutor.

The morning passed in a most desultory manner; no one seemed to think it worth while to settle to any occupation, so some strolled to look at the decorations of the dining-tent, others loitered on the terraces, enjoying the balmy air, more like July than treacherous and fickle May, and Lindsay persuaded Hyacinth to introduce him to the Dell. He won her heart by his warmly-expressed admiration of Ronald, but the stately deer-hound himself declined to be conciliated, and, though passively enduring his caresses, could not be induced to take the slightest notice of him. Sailor was more amiable, but even he was not so demonstrative as usual, and Hyacinth was rather vexed, and scolded them both for being extremely rude. But Lindsay did not much care; he was occupied in admiring the grace of his cousin's slight figure as she bent over the dogs, and felt gratified at her annoyance that they did not take to him.

"This is lovely, indeed!" he exclaimed, as they seated themselves under the beech-tree and looked down on the Dell, with which the reader is already familiar; then, after a pause, he continued, "Is there a boat? I should so like to row you on the lake."

"Come along and I'll row you," cried Hyacinth, springing up. "Christian and I go out most days."

"Alone?"

"Alone, of course! Who should come with us?"

"But something might happen."

"Not it! Why, we began rowing when we were eight years old."

By this time they were seated in the boat, and, with a few powerful strokes, Hyacinth shot out nearly into the centre of the lake. When they reached the island, she pulled under the shadow of a large horse-chestnut, and, resting on her oars, began to sing "Fair Helen of Kirkconnel." As she warbled,

> "Oh Helen fair
> Beyond compare,"

Lindsay, leaning back in the stern and watching her, thought the description was most applicable to herself.

If there be one place more perilous than another for a *tête-à-tête* between two young people, that place is indubitably a boat. There is such a sense of isolation, such an utter stillness, it is so impossible that anything can be overheard, that there is every opportunity for, and temptation to, love-making. Lindsay and Hyacinth had not yet reached that stage, but he took a tremendous stride towards it during that hour of *dolce far niente*, and Hyacinth was scarcely so fancy-free, when she once more drew the boat into its resting-place, as she had been when she left the shore. What had influenced her none could have told, most certainly she could not have done so; nay, she was as yet serenely unaware of any change in herself; it is rare, indeed, that the victims of Eros the Invincible feel the moment of their deadly wound, let the shaft rankle ever so keenly afterwards.

It was with a contraction of the brow that Mrs. Ettrick saw them enter the dining-room, and heard the account of their morning's amusement; but there was little time to lose, and she had no opportunity of speaking to her son before the whole party adjourned to the tent—it had been deemed best that the house-party should only make their appearance when the actual dinner was over, in time for the speeches and the health-drinking. Sir Loudoun led the way with Lady Tynedale, desiring Lindsay, who followed with Christian, to place her on his left hand, and Mrs. Ettrick felt much gratified at seeing him selected as her cavalier on the occasion; it was

impossible, she thought, but that Sir Loudoun must "mean something."

Lindsay, not knowing, as Christian did, what was coming, could not conceive why the hand resting on his arm trembled so exceedingly; it seemed such a very commonplace circumstance to listen to a few speeches, and to bow and smile when the twin-healths were drunk, that he could not understand what there was to be nervous about. Hyacinth was evidently quite at her ease; why should not Christian be the same? But he was soon to be enlightened, for Sir Loudoun, rising, announced that he wished to say a few words before any healths were proposed. He began by alluding to himself as an old man, feeble and frail, who might before any long time had elapsed be called away from their midst—thereby suffusing Hyacinth's blue eyes with tears—and went on to remark that he was glad to take this opportunity of informing them, his tenants and very good friends, under whose rule they would live when he was gone. After mature deliberation on the subject, it had appeared to him undesirable to divide the property equally between two sisters, as they might marry men of widely divergent views, and whose opinions as to what should be done might be absolutely antagonistic. He had therefore made his dear eldest daughter, Christian—laying his hand for a moment on her shoulder—heiress of his estate, and of a proper income, while his younger daughter would inherit a suitable fortune; that he had entailed the estate upon his daughter's children, and that in default of male issue it would revert to his daughter Hyacinth. He wished them all health and happiness, and sat down amid prolonged cheering.

Then there rose the oldest and principal tenant on the estate, Jonathan Field, of Cowslip Farm, who, in a long, rambling, and, it must be confessed, confused speech, tried every one's patience, and his conclusion of "Long life, happiness, and many happy returns of the day, and a good husband too, and may he come before long to Miss Ettrick, our good Squire as is to be," involved as it was, was welcomed with relief. The toast was, of course, enthusiastically received, and Sir Loudoun was rising to return thanks for his daughter, when, to his amazement, Christian laid her hand on his arm and rose herself. She was pale as marble, but showed no other sign of nervousness, although the dead silence that en-

sued on her rising was enough to appal more accustomed speakers. She spoke slowly and clearly, though somewhat low.

"I feel that I must thank you myself for the kind way in which you have drunk my health, and received the intelligence of our future close connection with each other, though I am sure you trust with me that the day of its commencement may be very far distant; but when that day comes, if come it ever does, you shall find me careful for your welfare and for your interests as for my own. I could not indeed be otherwise, for I believe firmly that all men are equal, and that it should be our endeavor to obliterate, so far as it is possible to do so, all distinctions of class, and all accidents, for such they are, of birth and fortune. I thank you again for drinking my health."

This speech was considerably above the heads of the majority of the audience, but they applauded it none the less loudly for that. Among the aristocratic portion of the community, however, it caused considerable consternation. Sir Loudoun, mortified and annoyed, was already somewhat repenting having by this public announcement rendered his decision irrevocable; Lindsay was looking almost with disgust at a girl who could be so (according to his views) unfeminine as, first, to volunteer to make a speech, when there was not the slightest occasion for her doing so; and, secondly, to avow a wish to revolutionize society. Hyacinth was vexed at perceiving that every one was privately blaming her sister; and Lady Tynedale was endeavoring, by starting various topics, to restore the equanimity of the party.

To a certain extent she succeeded, and the necessary toasts and speeches were duly got through; but a damp had been thrown over the assembly, and no one was sorry when it was declared to be time to adjourn to the tent prepared for the school-children's tea.

"Where on earth did Christian contrive to pick up these odd ideas? She is a regular socialist!" said Lady Tynedale to Mrs. Ettrick, as they strolled on together.

But though Mrs. Ettrick was fully as much horrified as any one else at Christian's outburst, it was by no means her intention to show her feelings. Sir Loudoun's announcement had quite decided her as to which sister Lindsay must marry.

Ettrick Hall ought certainly to go with the title; and if he were once in possession, Christian's oddities might be snubbed and disregarded, so she answered, diplomatically,—

"Oh! one must not think too much of a girl's notions. The dear children have seen nothing of the world; and dearest Christian has always had a great turn for serious reading, while she has never had any one to talk over her fancies with. A little intercourse with the world will soon make her like other people."

"I doubt it," thought Lady Tynedale. "Mere visionary fancies would hardly have made her take such a decisive step as to make that speech. She must have a strong belief in her own views, at any rate, to dare public opinion for them in such determined fashion. It is a pity—it always is when a woman elects to leave the beaten track, more especially when, as in this instance, the divergent path is such a dangerous one. To my fancy, too, the girl is shallow, though I hardly know her well enough to venture to judge. Certainly Hyacinth is far pleasanter and more engaging, even although she is a little wild."

A school-tea is too ordinary and too uninteresting an undertaking to merit detailed description. Naturally, after their achievements with kettles of tea and baskets of buns, the party were tolerably tired, but after dinner the younger portion revived, and warmly welcomed Lindsay's suggestion that they should see whether the ball-room floor was in good order for Friday night. Lady Tynedale volunteered her services as musician, and, the rest of the party having sat down to whist, Sir Loudoun and Mrs. Ettrick were left in undisturbed *tête-à-tête*.

It soon became apparent to the lady that her brother-in-law had something that he wished to say to her. He began sentences and left them unfinished, moved uneasily about the room, poked the fire, and at last, seating himself by her, said,—

"I trust you have no pressing engagements that will oblige you to hurry away from Ettrick?"

Short of an absolute royal command, there was no engagement that, in her present frame of mind, Mrs. Ettrick was not prepared calmly to disavow, and she replied,—

"No, I have none—none, at least, that are of the slightest consequence, if I can be of any use to you, dear Sir Loudoun."

Sir Loudoun still continued to fidget, then, assuming a confidential air, and speaking in a very low voice, he said,—

"It is better that we should understand one another at once. Mrs. Ettrick, I am very desirous that your son should marry my eldest daughter, Christian. The property will thus go with the title. She is, I fully believe, fancy-free—indeed, it is impossible that she should be otherwise. Do you imagine your son to be equally so?"

Mrs. Ettrick almost gasped with delight. Here was Sir Loudoun himself proposing the very arrangement for which she longed! She fully believed Lindsay's affections to be free, but even if she had not done so her answer would still have been the same.

"My dear Sir Loudoun, this is most unexpected! Of course nothing could give me greater pleasure than to welcome dearest Christian as my daughter. Naturally I cannot answer positively for Lindsay, but I have no reason to believe that he has ever had the slightest attachment."

"I am glad to hear it. And now I may as well speak quite frankly to you—it is pleasanter to me than entering upon the subject with him. Let me tell you that the income which will accompany Ettrick Hall is eight thousand pounds a year; and that on her marriage I should allow my daughter three thousand pounds a year, and give Glen Ettrick up to her. Do you think it advisable that I should speak to her on the subject of your son?"

"By no means, dear Sir Loudoun. Just consider—the dear girl has known him barely four-and-twenty hours. She would be startled—disturbed,—more especially just now, when there is so much to agitate her. She looked quite overcome in the tent to-day."

"I heartily wish she had been too much so to make herself so ridiculous! Did you ever hear anything so absurd?"

"A mere nothing, dear Sir Loudoun; just a clever girl's evanescent fancy, that will soon be forgotten when she has mixed a little more in society. If I may advise, say nothing to her about it; it would be making it of too much consequence—and opposition sometimes roots ideas in young minds. You would doubtless wish me to tell Lindsay what you have said? It would perhaps be pleasanter for you than speaking to him yourself."

"Yes, yes—if you please," said Sir Loudoun, who felt quite nervous at the idea of a conversation with his nephew on such a delicate topic, though he thought nothing of calmly disposing of his daughter's life without questioning her consent.

Why is it that hearts are things of which elderly persons are so remarkably prone to forget the existence? They must themselves presumably, at some remote period, have possessed such appendages; and yet, generation after generation, they invariably act on the assumption, first, that every girl is dying to be married; and, secondly, that the man they choose for her will suit her to the full as well as any other. And in this faith they persevere, though proved once and again to be lamentably mistaken, and attribute each successive failure to some quite exceptional perversity of fate.

All through this conversation Mrs. Ettrick's eyes had been wandering uneasily to the ball-room, where Lindsay and Hyacinth seemed to be flying up and down in undesirably constant companionship. This must be put a stop to. But how? She hardly, for the moment, saw. Her conversation with Lindsay in the train had shown her that, though undoubtedly in great financial difficulties, he was not yet in such straits as to be readily amenable to maternal persuasion, if he once fell in love with Hyacinth. "Fell in love!" Mrs. Ettrick's thin lips curled at the thought. It is doubtful if she had ever had much reverence for the tender passion; but now a very small coin would have turned the scale against it in her estimation. She foresaw that the difficulties in the way of his being persuaded to marry Christian would be considerable; she was aware that he inherited from her the obstinacy which, in her own character, she called firmness, but had also, unfortunately, a considerable share of the improvidence and want of care for the morrow that had characterized his father. It would, at any rate, be something to stop the mischief for that night; so, having suggested to Sir Loudoun that it was late, she made her appearance in the ball-room.

"Christian, love!"

Christian, who, in spite of all her endeavors, had fallen more than once a victim to the increasing attentions of Captain Gordon, turned round, delighted at the thought of release.

"Your father thinks, dearest, that it is time to go to bed.

It has been a tiring and exciting day, and there is much to be done to-morrow."

Christian was nothing loth, but Hyacinth lamented audibly.

"Only half-past ten!—how provoking! Is anybody tired?"

But the move had been made, and Hyacinth had to submit, though not, as her aunt observed with annoyance, without whispered condolences from Lindsay.

"Can you come to my room? I want to talk to you," she said to her son, as she wished him good-night.

But Lindsay, anticipating a renewal of their traveling discussion, excused himself hastily. "He must remain in the smoking-room; his uncle did not smoke, and had requested him to act as host."

So Mrs. Ettrick was obliged to be contented, and to go to bed with the intention of talking seriously to her son the next morning. With this view, she rose at an abnormal hour (her toilet arrangements were not of a nature to be lightly or rapidly undertaken), in the hope of waylaying him before breakfast, and before he had time to attach himself still more to Hyacinth. But she was again doomed to disappointment, for, as she was giving the finishing touch to her complexion, she saw him strolling along the edge of the lake with his cousins. Certainly it was some consolation that Christian was of the party, and he seemed to be talking to her quite as much as to her sister; still it was aggravating to be obliged to leave her warning again unspoken, and even more so to have risen unnecessarily so much before her wonted hour.

Altogether, when Mrs. Ettrick, wearing her softest and sweetest smile, which was as much a part of her wardrobe as her best cap—we beg her pardon, *coiffure*—seated herself at the breakfast-table, she was by no means in her smoothest temper, but rather inclined to see anything which might displease her in the worst light. She was naturally, under the circumstances, inclined to watch Hyacinth, and had soon constructed an indictment of considerable levity against that young lady. Indeed, to any one unable or unwilling to make allowance for the utter novelty of her situation, in thus enjoying society for the first time, Hyacinth might well have seemed wild. Endowed with extreme vitality and power of enjoyment, things that would have passed unremarked by most people were positive pleasures and delights to her. She felt

in such a state of exhilaration that it was only with considerable effort that she refrained from dancing and singing as she walked along; and it was, of course, impossible that such exuberant spirits could be utterly repressed. Then, although she hardly knew the meaning of the word "flirtation," she had a very natural and feminine delight in admiration, and had not the *savoir faire* or knowledge of the world requisite to dissemble her innocent satisfaction at the attentions paid to her.

And so, seated between Lindsay and Mr. Mackenzie, she was, without the slightest bad intention, or the faintest idea that she was "flirting," making herself what Mrs. Ettrick mentally described as "very conspicuous." She infinitely preferred Christian's demeanor, as she sat, stiff and cold, at the head of the table, and was rejoiced to perceive that, short of absolute rudeness, she could hardly have repelled Captain Gordon's advanees more successfully.

"She is very *posée* and sensible, and will make Lindsay an excellent, steady wife," was her reflection, purposely ignoring the peculiar views which Christian had enunciated, and which hardly gave promise of her being specially tractable, or easily led.

Come what might, she was determined to capture Lindsay speedily—but it was no easy task. First, before she could waylay him, he had strolled off to the stables with Hyacinth, and two or three more, to be introduced to Bay Charmer—and who does not know the length to which a visit to the stables is wont to extend?—more especially when an enthusiastic young lady, bent on exhibiting her favorite, is one of the party. Then she lost sight of him altogether till luncheon-time; and immediately after that it was necessary to go and see the laborers at dinner, and then to superintend the old women's tea. At the latter she observed with satisfaction that he was assisting Christian and leaving Hyacinth to the care of young Donald Mackenzie; but very soon afterwards she was again discomposed by seeing him walking up and down by the lake alone with Hyacinth and the dogs. She felt that, if her warning were to be of any use, it must be given speedily; so she emerged on to the upper terrace, and waved her handkerchief in a beckoning manner to Lindsay. It was evident to her that he quitted his companion with reluctance, and she rejoiced at having taken a decisive step.

"Lindsay, will you come to my room now? I want to talk to you."

He glanced longingly back towards the lake.

"Won't it do some other time, mother? It's a shame to lose such a lovely evening."

"No, Lindsay—no time like the present; besides, we dine early to-night, on account of the servants' ball;" and putting her arm within her son's, Mrs. Ettrick drew him, an unwilling prisoner, to her own apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

"Saint-seducing gold."

Romeo and Juliet.

"Mais elle, par la valse ou la ronde emportée,
Volait, et revenait, et ne respirait pas,
Et s'enivrait des sons de la flûte vantée,
Des fleurs, des lustres d'or, de la fête enchantée,
Du bruit des voix, du bruit des pas.
Quel bonheur de bondir, éperdue, en la foule,
De sentir par le bal ses sens multipliés,
Et de ne pas savoir si dans la nue on roule,
Si l'on chasse en fuyant la terre, ou si l'on foule
Un flot tournoyant sous ses pieds."

Les Orientales.

MRS. ETTRICK sank into a comfortable easy-chair on one side of the small bright fire in her room. Lindsay stood leaning on his elbow, looking ill at ease, and decidedly sulky. He was the first to break the silence.

"Well, mother, hadn't we better get it over at once?"

Mrs. Ettrick's ear detected the temper in his voice, and she at once knew that her work must be done diplomatically.

"Well, Lindsay, I have wished to speak to you all day, but you have been so engaged that there has been no opportunity. Your uncle spoke to me last night."

"Spoke to you! Of course you mean about something particular?"

"Of course. He told me that it was his great desire that you should marry his daughter."

"Did he? By Jove! Well, if she will agree I have no objection."

"He said that he felt sure that she was fancy-free—indeed that it was quite impossible that she should be otherwise—and he agreed with me that a little knowledge of the world would soon modify her strange views and opinions."

"Strange views! She has no strange views," said Lindsay, wonderingly; then, as it dawned upon him that they were thinking of different persons, he exclaimed, "I verily believe you are talking of Christian."

"Of course! Of whom else should I be talking?" replied his mother, calmly. "Your uncle spoke of his wish that this estate should go with the title as well as the Scotch property, which is so small. He settles eight thousand pounds a year on Christian, with the place, and will give her an allowance of three thousand pounds a year on her marriage."

There was a pause, which rather alarmed Mrs. Ettrick, who had expected her son to flame forth into violent protestations (which, from their very vehemence, would soon have exhausted themselves), and hardly knew what to make of his silence. At last he said,—

"I suppose Hyacinth will have a large fortune, too?"

"Your uncle never mentioned her, but I dare say she will have an ordinary younger child's fortune. Christian is treated exactly as if she were the eldest son."

"It is a great pity she should be, I'm sure! Were you not disgusted at her conduct yesterday? So bold and unfeminine! And a nice person she is to have possession of an estate, with those socialistic views!"

"My dear Lindsay, the poor dear girl has never had any one to talk her out of her fancies. Living shut up here, she has read all sorts of absurd books, and fancies that the lower classes have got grievances. A little contact with sensible people will soon show how foolish and fanciful she has been. Besides, even if it were otherwise, you would be master."

"Still it would not be pleasant to have a wife who was always thinking one a brute for not dividing the land with one's tenants, or sitting down to dinner with the plowman. Don't laugh. I assure you Hyacinth told me Christian thought it very wrong to divide these festivities into classes. She wanted to mix every one together, and sit down promiscuously."

"Ridiculous of course. Still, Lindsay, it will soon wear off, and shows considerable amiability of disposition."

"Well, the long and the short of the matter is that I can't do it," said Lindsay, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "I can't, indeed, mother. I—that is, I think—in fact, I'm in love with Hyacinth."

He evidently expected that this announcement would take his mother by surprise, but Mrs. Ettrick, who had been awaiting it, never moved a muscle of her countenance, and replied,—

"With Hyacinth! My dear Lindsay, that's a pity, for it is impossible—first, because you imperatively need money, and her fortune, however munificent Sir Loudoun may be, must be infinitely smaller than Christian's; and secondly, because, unless appearances greatly deceive me, it could not be said of her that she was fancy-free."

"What do you mean? What have you heard? Whom are you thinking of?" exclaimed Lindsay, standing erect and facing his mother, who replied, calmly,—

"I have *heard* nothing; but I more than suspect that Mr. Lambert of Stanham, who dined here the night of our arrival, of being the favored swain."

"What, that ugly, red-headed fellow!" (Be it remarked, *par parenthèse*, that Wilfred Lambert's hair and beard were simply of a ruddy brown.) "Impossible! Besides, I—that is, she——"

"She has been so gracious to you? *Connu!* but then the other Richmond has not been in the field. He will be here, of course, to-morrow night. Watch the welcome she gives him."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Lindsay. "At any rate, he shan't win her without a struggle."

"Seriously, though, dear boy, were the field free, you must not think of her. You know, as well as I do, that money you must have."

"Of course; but she is sure to have some."

"Probably; but not sufficient. Lindsay, tell me honestly what sum would it require to pay off your debts?"

"Nothing under six thousand pounds," answered her son, sulkily.

"Six thousand pounds! That is far worse even than I

feared. Lindsay, you must be mad to hesitate. Let it be once known that you are engaged to Christian, Sir Loudoun's declared heiress, and it will, as you know, be easy enough to raise the money."

"Yes, I know; but Hya——"

"We know nothing of what Hyacinth's fortune may be—not more, I should imagine, than twenty thousand pounds. Even if it were fifty thousand pounds, which is most improbable, it would of course be too tightly tied up to be available; and you could not afford to pay the interest of the borrowed money."

"But surely my uncle——"

"Would hardly be in the humor to pay such a sum, when you had just upset his favorite scheme, and run counter to his expressed wishes. I do not imagine that it is any especial wish for you as a son-in-law that influences him—he is thinking of keeping land and title together."

"After all, it is a new acquisition. It isn't like an old family place."

"Lindsay! I really did not think it was in you to make such an idiotic speech! If you are so foolish, there is not much use in my attempting to help you. Pray what difference does that make to the money question? There is another thing your uncle said—he expressed a wish that we should prolong our visit."

"For how long?"

"He mentioned no date. I imagine it was understood to mean until you had settled matters with Christian."

"I don't believe she would have me—that fellow Gordon has quite appropriated her."

"Not quite—she snubs him in the quietest, but most remorseless manner; shows really surprising judgment for a girl unused to society. His forwardness is quite amazing."

"My uncle could not care so very much which of his daughters I married."

"As I said before, it is not his wish for you as a son-in-law, but his desire that his daughter should be mistress both of Ettrick Hall and of Glen Ettrick. There is no use in going over the same ground again and again, Lindsay. You know as well as I do how imperatively you require money, and that such a chance will never again come in your way."

"Well, what would you have me do?" said Lindsay, in his most ungracious tone.

"Single Christian out, and pay her marked attention. You will have ample opportunities, both at the servants' ball to-night, and at the ball to the whole neighborhood to-morrow night. You should engage her for the first dance at once. Then the more you avoid Hyacinth the better. I'm sure, if you watch her flirting manner a little, you will soon feel glad that she is not the heiress."

"I can't stand hearing her abused," said Lindsay, quickly.

"Abused! My dearest boy, what strong words you use! I have no doubt she is an amiable and fascinating girl, and only deplore that she should be so wild and so unacquainted with the usages of society. Her taking you out on the lake alone, for instance, was most strange and improper."

"I really can't see it. We are cousins."

"True; but complete strangers, for all that. However, we need not discuss her. Doubtless your fancy will soon pass away. This is hardly your first *affaire de cœur*, Lindsay."

Mrs. Ettrick knew her son could not contradict her assertion. Lindsay had a marked proclivity for what he was pleased to call "falling in love" with every pretty girl with whom he came in contact, and who flattered his vanity by seeming to appreciate his attentions, but his attachments had never yet been either deep or lasting. He had an uneasy consciousness that his feelings towards Hyacinth were different from anything he had ever before experienced, but he knew it would be impossible to persuade his mother that such was the case, and also that, even if were feasible to convince her, it would make little or no difference in her views as to his necessary conduct. He knew that she had but scant respect for Cupid, and thought that a love-match without adequate means was sufficient reason for believing its perpetrators to be utterly bereft of their senses, and unfit to be intrusted with the management of their own affairs.

The mere thought of renouncing his hopes of Hyacinth gave him exquisite pain. She had made a deeper impression upon him than any woman had ever made before, and he felt that to remain at Ettrick as Christian's suitor, and to see her wooed, and probably won, by another, would be almost intolerable. And yet, he told himself, he must do it; he knew

his mother was wise in what she said of the financial aspect of the question, and felt that prudence would compel him to follow her sage counsel.

Mrs. Ettrick watched him, without appearing to do so, as he stood gazing moodily at the fire and revolving matters in his mind, and her experienced eyes perceived that he was rapidly coming round to her views. She was too wise to say more; she never spoiled her handiwork, as so many do, by the addition of elaborate after-touches; she deemed it wiser to sow the seed, and trust to time to make it bear fruit. She even refrained from further allusion to the subject when her son sulkily inquired if she wanted him any longer, and responded that she had no idea how late it was—it was quite time to dress. Indeed, it was seldom that Mrs. Ettrick's toilette was performed in so brief a period as was the case that evening, and though the servants' ball did not demand any very elaborate preparation, she was not the woman ever to neglect to make the best of herself, and certainly looked surprisingly young to be the mother of a son of thirty. The rouge and the powder, of which Hyacinth retained so vivid a recollection, were applied with such consummate art as to defy detection, and with her well-preserved figure and profusion of false hair, Mrs. Ettrick looked, especially at night, considerably under forty. Her income was small, and she felt well disposed to marry again, but was firmly determined that certain wealth and possible rank were the only bribes that would induce her to do so. Her feelings were of the coldest—indeed, it is doubtful if she had ever cared much for any one, with the exception of her son, to whose interests and welfare she was heartily devoted.

Lindsay returned her affection in his own way, but his nature was neither warm nor sympathetic, and he was also firmly inclosed in a thick crust of selfishness, that rendered his own comfort and convenience matters of paramount importance in his eyes. His home-training had increased this—indeed, Mrs. Ettrick had encouraged his inclination to care for himself by all the means in her power, persuaded that, in so doing, she was teaching him the best means of making his way in life. In a worldly sense, perhaps she was right; those rare natures who pause and turn aside to take thought for others are passed in the breathless race of life, and left far

behind by those whose ends and aims centre in their own advancement, and who would see a neighbor sink beneath the black waters of adversity sooner than abandon an inch of their own vantage-ground. Lindsay Ettrick was one of these, not from natural heartlessness—indeed, his impulses were usually generous—but from the training which had made self the prime object of life, and had taught him to subordinate all things to his own comfort and advancement.

He left his mother's room abusing his own "bad luck;" he was used to things going smoothly with him, and deemed it a hard case that the sister who suited his necessities should not also be the one who had fascinated his taste. He tried all the time he was dressing to settle on some topic to introduce at dinner that would interest Christian, and yet not cause her to expound any of her objectionable opinions; but Hyacinth's face, and the recollection of her saucy, piquant speeches, disturbed his meditations sorely, and the subject of discourse was still unsettled when he entered the drawing-room. Probably, whatever he had settled, the result would have been much the same. An unlucky allusion of Mr. Mackenzie's, shortly after dinner had commenced, opened up the subject of Female Education and Employment; and Christian, who never felt the least shy of talking on such subjects, whatever she might do on others, soon gave vent to opinions for which, at that moment, and under all the circumstances, Mrs. Ettrick could willingly have boxed her ears. She could not catch quite all, but she heard enough to make her comprehend Lindsay's face of polite disgust, and tremble for the effect such sentiments might have upon his resolution. She felt positively grateful to Hyacinth, who, to prevent herself from hearing what she termed "Christian's heroics," which she cordially detested, had set up a violent flirtation with young Mr. Mackenzie, which, as his mother perceived with satisfaction, was not unobserved by Lindsay.

In truth he was delighted that dinner that evening was necessarily but a short ceremony; he had a truly masculine horror of a woman who held opinions or asserted herself, and Christian's openly-avowed belief in the immeasurable superiority of the female sex was a dire offense in his eyes.

Besides, what could be more unfeminine than a woman who claimed equality with men, and confidently asserted the right

of her sex to enter all professions, the medical one not excepted? And this was the girl for whose fortune he should be forced to sell himself and to give up all thought of Hyacinth, by whom he was so much attracted! If he were but free!—clear, that is to say, of debt! His mother might preach as long as she liked of the advisability of uniting title and property, Christian might remain unwooed, and turn Ettrick into a Female College, for all he should care; but that fatal six thousand pounds hung like a millstone round his neck, and dragged him irresistibly towards the heiress.

It was with a feeling of positive dislike that he gave his arm to Christian, to lead her into the servants' hall, where the ball was to take place; and with a sensation of relief that he resigned her to the steward, Mr. Margesson, with whom she was to open it, while he himself was destined to the portly housekeeper. He had followed his mother's advice, however, and had secured Christian's hand for the first dance the ensuing night; indeed, she was nothing loth: she liked Lindsay better than any member of the party, and felt glad of any refuge from the attentions of Captain Gordon, which became each day more tender and persistent. She even offered to row her cousin on the lake the next morning, that he might see whether she or Hyacinth was the better oar.

Lindsay had it on the tip of his tongue to refuse; Hyacinth had proposed and half arranged a riding-party for the next morning, but he recollected his part in time, and with a smothered sigh accepted her offer with every appearance of willingness.

Mrs. Ettrick was well pleased the next morning when, from the window, she saw her son walking along the terrace by Christian's side, carrying her shawl, and evidently endeavoring to make himself agreeable. And it really was not so unpleasing a task as he had anticipated; when not mounted on one of her special hobbies, Christian could be very pleasant, and as Lindsay carefully avoided all dangerous topics they had a very agreeable morning, for she had enough of ordinary feminine feeling to be much delighted with his unhesitating verdict as to the immense superiority of her stroke over Hyacinth's. He could hardly, however, dissemble his scornful amusement when he heard his mother petting Christian, and telling her how nice it was of her to take him out, for he was always so

fond of being rowed. It was "so nice" of Christian, it had been "wild and improper" of Hyacinth; how differently the world, represented by his mother, judged the identical action in different people, according as interests were affected!

Hyacinth had been considerably disappointed at Lindsay's defection from the riding-party; she had taken what she called "a great fancy" to him—little dreaming, poor child! that the "fancy" was the fatal one of love,—and was both surprised and dismayed to find how completely his remaining behind with Christian spoiled her morning's pleasure. It in some measure revealed to her the state of her own feelings—not, indeed, that she realized that she was in love, but that she discovered that she "cared about" Lindsay, and, with instinctive pride, at once decided that this state of feeling must be cautiously concealed from him.

Mrs. Ettrick had ample grounds for calling her wild that afternoon. Excited at the prospect of the evening's unwonted entertainment, her spirits at times knew no bounds; at others, the discomfort of her newly-discovered secret made her silent and (a rare thing indeed for Hyacinth) almost cross. She snapped at one or two of Mrs. Ettrick's honeyed speeches in a manner that caused that lady to say, "My *dearest* Hyacinth!" in a tone, and with an elevation of the eyebrows, that drove the girl nearly frantic; and at length she emerged on to the terrace, and commenced a flirtation *à outrance* with Mr. Mackenzie.

"Lindsay, look here," said his mother, calling him into her room just before dinner—"see what a lovely bouquet I have had sent down."

"Yes," said Lindsay, looking at it without much interest; "but could they not have made you one here?"

"Made *me* one! I believe you think it is for myself! Not exactly. No, Lindsay; it is for you to present to Christian."

"What a good idea of yours! I never should have thought of it. It is a great beauty! When shall I give it her?"

"Send it to her room now, with a line to say you hope she will accept it."

"I wish I had one for Hyacinth too," said Lindsay, as he sat down to write; "it seems hard she should not have one."

"Nonsense!" said his mother, impatiently. "Doubtless

hers will come from Stanham. Besides, it would spoil the whole thing, and prevent its being a special attention to Christian. You have done very well to-day—keep it up to-night."

The great ball-room at Ettrick presented an animated appearance that evening, when all the guests were assembled. When the dancing began, Mrs. Ettrick found herself, to her infinite satisfaction, delegated to do the honors. The situation was so pleasant to her that she mused more than once whether it might not be possible for her to persuade Sir Loudoun that his comfort would be much increased by her remaining permanently at Ettrick, and managing his establishment for him. The girls would soon marry, and it would surely be pleasanter for him to have his sister-in-law to make his house cheerful than to live alone. The more she thought of it, the more feasible it seemed, and the better she liked the prospect. But through all these dreams of the future she kept a keen watch on the proceedings of Lindsay and Christian, besides having a tolerably clear idea of what Hyacinth was doing.

Christian looked her very best. The family diamonds, which her father had expressed a wish that she should wear, were, of course, but little suited to a girl; but the tiara proved very becoming to her regular features, and showed to great advantage in her dark hair. Hyacinth's diamonds were very different. They had been bought in Paris when her mother was a girl, and were fashioned as flowers on flexible stems. One wreath of them confined her curls, while another formed a sort of garland round the top of her dress. Both sisters were in white, Christian with no vestige of color; but Hyacinth had been unable to resist the temptation of some garlands of her name-flower.

Mrs. Ettrick marked with satisfaction the *empressement* with which Mr. Lambert sought out her youngest niece, and the very flattering welcome that she accorded him. Neither she nor its recipient guessed that the welcome might have been cooler had not Hyacinth been keenly mortified at Lindsay's not having secured her for a single dance. Every one else in the house had done so early in the day—Mr. Lambert the night that he had dined at Ettrick. Surely, even if Lindsay cared for Christian—and she supposed he must do so, by his behavior, and by his having thought of that bouquet—it

was not necessary so absolutely to neglect her. Well, *she* didn't care; and she abandoned herself somewhat wildly to the delight of the mere fact of dancing; and when, after a time, Lindsay came to beg for a valse, she replied that she had not one disengaged.

"Not one! Oh! Hyacinth," said Lindsay, who had been looking forward to this dance as a recompense for all his enforced love-making. "Think again. Can't you throw some one over?"

"Really I don't choose to do so. If you had cared to dance with me, you would have asked me before, like the others."

"Not I!" said Lindsay, guessing by her tone that she was piqued, but really wished to dance with him; "I thought we were friends, Hyacinth, that you liked me a little, and that we need not be formal."

"I don't want to be formal," said Hyacinth, who was yielding fast; "but——"

"But you'll give me this valse," said Lindsay, putting his arm round her waist with a quiet air of proprietorship as the music struck up, and ignoring the angry looks of Mr. Mackenzie, who had just come up to claim his partner. "Did you think, Hyacinth, that I was going to submit to not dancing with you, even if you were not the best dancer in the room? I have been looking forward to this all day."

Which was truer than it is the wont of ball-room speeches to be. If Lindsay had had any doubt before of his feelings respecting Hyacinth, it was disposed of by the sight of the number of men who surrounded her. With the first sharp pang of jealousy consequent on her warm reception of Mr. Lambert, there came the knowledge of how dearly he loved her, together with the agonizing thought that *he* had no right to be jealous, he who was forbidden by inexorable fate even to attempt to win her. If he had been wise, he would have left her alone and foregone the dance he so much wished for; but it would have been as easy for the moth to resist the fatal fascination of the flame, and with his eyes open to the state of his own feelings, he still persisted in raising the intoxicating cup to his lips.

"Come into the conservatory," he said, when the dance was over; and they sauntered in and seated themselves under a

large orange-tree, which screened them from view of the ball-room. They were very silent. Lindsay was regretting having come; he felt that if he spoke at that moment he should—he must say something imprudent, something that would upset his mother's schemes and ruin his prospects with Christian. Hyacinth felt a nervousness she could not understand, and was considerably puzzled why Lindsay looked at her so fixedly, and yet did not speak. She caught hold of a branch of the orange-tree and broke off a spray, then, gathering a rosebud, twined them together and held them towards her cousin.

"Your flower is faded; take this," she said; but she was quite unprepared for the vehemence with which Lindsay seized and pressed her hand to his lips.

"I 'll keep it forever," he exclaimed, passionately. "Oh, Hyacinth, if you only knew——" but at that moment they were disturbed by Christian, who appeared from another part of the conservatory, in a state of evident discomposure. Looking in the direction whence she had come, Lindsay perceived Ralph Gordon rising from his knees, with a rueful and discomfited expression of countenance.

CHAPTER VII.

"I have no other but a woman's reason;
I think him so because I think him so."
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face."
Much Ado About Nothing.

If Wilfred Lambert had been told that he was in love when he left Stanham on the night of the Ettrick ball, he would have laughed with all his heart at the very idea of such a thing. Had the same accusation been made as he returned home he would very probably have laughed; but it would

have been more for the purpose of concealing the fact, even from himself, than from any other reason. The warm welcome which Hyacinth, anxious to dissemble her annoyance at Lindsay's neglect, had given him, flattered him considerably, and caused him to fall an easy prey to the fascinating manner to which he had partially succumbed on their first acquaintance. He was totally unaccustomed to practicing self-denial; he had been forced to abstain from many things for which he wished; but it had always been from necessity rather than from principle, and, his mother having died at his birth, there had been no feminine influence to illustrate by example, rather than by precept, the beauty of the virtue. His hot temper and warm passions were easily aroused, and it was not in him to refrain from rendering Hyacinth unnecessarily conspicuous by dancing with her as often as she would let him. If it had not coincided so exactly with her wish to show Lindsay that Hyacinth was infinitely too wild to suit him, Mrs. Ettrick would probably have warned her niece that her behavior was remarkable; but as it was, she let it pass, reserving her observation of it for future use, if necessary or convenient.

No woman, more especially a young, inexperienced girl, is ever insensible to the pleasure of being worshiped, and Wilfred Lambert was no novice in the art of wooing. His method was somewhat warm and impassioned, but perhaps it was none the less acceptable to Hyacinth on that account. And yet all the time, deep down in her heart, was a secret ache that it was not Lindsay—Lindsay whom, unknown to herself, she was fast learning to love—who sought her. She realized with a pang, the sharpness of which surprised and dismayed her, that it was Christian for whom he cared; and besides the soreness of her heart there was a distinct feeling of surprise, for Hyacinth valued her personal gifts very highly, and considered herself, as she was indeed justified in doing, far better-looking than her sister.

In their extremely rare meetings with their neighbors she had always found herself sought as the more attractive, for Christian's decided views rather alarmed quiet people, and those who had not studied such subjects felt at a loss how to answer her. It seemed, therefore, doubly hard that, now that for the first time she cared specially for any one's notice or attention, it should be diverted from her to her sister. That

money could have anything to do with it never once occurred to her. Brought up in the seclusion of Ettrick, Hyacinth was a very infant in the ways of the world, and had less idea of the social value of money than an ordinary girl of ten. It did not once enter her mind as a probable occurrence that people would be likely to prefer Christian to her on account of her being the heiress, indeed it had never even occurred to her to wonder what her own fortune might be.

In short, in spite of her wildness, due partly to natural high spirits, but principally to the want of a mother's judicious training, Hyacinth Ettrick was as bright, innocent, and pure-minded a girl as could have been found in a wide area. And yet this evening it was not Mrs. Ettrick alone who was scandalized at her behavior, and whispers of "How sadly wild!" "What a terrible flirt!" circulated in the ball-room. They reached Lady Tynedale's ears, and pained her much. Joyous, high-spirited, and courted herself, she was able to sympathize with and see the innocence of the girlish joyousness which by older and less genial natures was so severely reprobated. Also, having fathomed Hyacinth's feelings, and discovered her incipient attachment to her cousin, she was at no loss to comprehend why, neglected by him, she had unintentionally plunged into this flirtation with Mr. Lambert.

She hardly knew what she could do. Their very short acquaintance had made her extremely fond of the girl, but she quite realized that, having been always used to independence, Hyacinth would be greatly inclined to resent interference. Still she did not like to let her go on making herself conspicuous, more especially as she had conceived a strong antipathy for Mr. Lambert; one of those repulsions for which it is so utterly impossible to give a reason, but which in sensitive natures are so almost invariably justified by subsequent experience. She noted Lindsay's approach to Hyacinth, the petulant manner in which she received his first advances, and the happy look of satisfaction with which she at length suffered herself to be pacified; she also observed their disappearance into the conservatory, and saw them emerge accompanied by Christian. She easily fathomed the state of the case respecting Lindsay—that he loved Hyacinth, and, before Christian was declared the heiress, had shown his preference sufficiently to awaken her regard; it was equally clear to her that he was

now worshiping at the gilded shrine of the "estate," and she despised him accordingly.

There were few things that excited such an unmitigated feeling of contempt in Lady Tynedale's breast as an inordinate love of money in young people. She always maintained it was a passion exclusively suitable to age, when all other pleasures had either palled or become impossible.

Before she was able to join Hyacinth, with the intention of endeavoring to suggest to her that she had already danced with Mr. Lambert oftener than custom warranted, she was annoyed to see him again approach and claim her for a valse; and at its conclusion she observed, with even greater vexation, that they disappeared into the conservatory. Hyacinth's want of knowledge of the world placed her at an immense disadvantage. She had no notion that she was doing anything unusual, or laying herself open to comment in dancing so constantly with the partner who pleased her next best to the one who did not give her the opportunity, and the secret in common between her and Mr. Lambert gave her a pleasant feeling of old acquaintanceship. When they were seated in the conservatory he said, bending over her,—

"We really must find some means, Miss Ettrick, of persuading Sir Loudoun to rescind his edict against hunting next winter. We really can't spare such a rider as you are."

"Oh! it would be delightful!" cried Hyacinth, flushing at the idea; "but I am afraid there is little hope of papa's consent." Then, remembering something her companion had said at dinner, she continued, "But you will not be here next winter, will you? I thought you were going abroad, and had given up the hounds?"

"Given them up—yes. As to going abroad, I am by no means decided. My present impression is that I shall remain at Stanham."

"If Christian cared for it, perhaps papa might let us go together," said Hyacinth; "but she does not; and I know he would never hear of my going alone."

"He need fear no danger if he had seen you that day—by Jove! how you went! You quite took my breath away once."

"I shouldn't mind where I went with Bay Charmer."

"She does seem very perfect. Miss Ettrick, you were very

unkind. Why wouldn't you let me have the brush mounted properly for you?"

"How could I?" said Hyacinth, blushing crimson. "You forget that it was all an accident my being there at all, and that I had no business to have the brush. Think of the commotion it would have caused when it arrived."

"You might have cautioned me. I assure you I can be very discreet."

"But I did not know you. I had never even seen you before."

"And so could not gauge the depths of my discretion—that is true. Miss Ettrick, tell me, what did you do with the brush?"

"It is quite safe," said Hyacinth, blushing still more hotly, and feeling, she hardly knew why, decidedly uncomfortable.

"Did you have it mounted?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how you contrived to get it done with the necessary secrecy?"

"I—I stopped at the under-keeper's as I came home, and his deaf and dumb boy did it for me. I can't think why you should care to know."

"Never mind, I do care. I am not likely to forget that day"—(this with an expressive glance of the dark eyes, that were his only good feature, raised Hyacinth's blushes once more to burning pitch)—"and, Miss Ettrick, where is it now?"

"Over the door of my room."

"Happy brush! how I wish"—but what he wished was destined to remain for the present unknown, for he was interrupted by the appearance of Walter Graham, who had been dispatched by his sister, Lady Tynedale, to break up the *tête-à-tête*, by reminding Hyacinth of a purely imaginary engagement to himself; and she was feeling so shy and uncomfortable at the moment that she welcomed him almost as a deliverer, and, to his considerable surprise, acquiesced unhesitatingly in his suggestion of her apocryphal engagement.

Wilfred Lambert watched for an opportunity to monopolize her once more, but Lindsay stood in his way; for, Christian having several engagements to fulfill, he was off duty, and, to his mother's sore discomfiture, at once devoted himself to his

younger cousin. Perilously pleasant were those dances, and Lady Tynedale, as she watched them, doubted if, after all, she had done wisely in disturbing Hyacinth's flirtation, as she had thus thrown her in the way of the cousin who was evidently attracted by her, who had certainly touched her heart, and who was yet so deliberately worshiping Mammon and paying his court to the elder sister.

Of what Christian's feelings might be, Lady Tynedale could form no idea; excepting on her own special topics, the girl was shy and reserved with strangers, and she felt by no means attracted towards her as she did towards Hyacinth. Still, if Lindsay married her while he cared for her sister, she was probably the one the most to be pitied of the party, certainly more so than Hyacinth, in that her fate would be fixed and irrevocable. Still, with all the will in the world to do good in the matter, Lady Tynedale felt that she was helpless, and that, even if she were not leaving the next day, there was really nothing that she could do. And while she was thus musing, the ball came to an end; dancing had been kept up so late that every one seemed to leave hastily at once.

> "Now half to the setting moon are gone,
> And half to the rising day;
> Low on the sand and loud on the stone
> The last wheel echoes away;"

and in the bustle of universal departure, Wilfred Lambert's very *empressé* farewell to Hyacinth passed unnoticed.

That young lady went to bed, but, for the first time, perhaps, in her whole life, sleep would not close her eyelids. She could not analyze her own feelings; she had no idea that she was in love with Lindsay, and yet she felt a sharp pang when she saw him paying such marked attention to Christian. She enjoyed immensely being courted and worshiped by Wilfred Lambert, and yet she felt a dim consciousness that one careless word from Lindsay was of more value to her than all Mr. Lambert's unmistakably ardent speeches. That Christian should be sought for her money never once occurred to her; they had always hitherto been absolutely equal in everything, and it did not strike her that the prospective possession of Ettrick by the elder sister made an enormous change in their relative positions. Neither, if she had realized it, would she

for one moment have suspected that so sordid a motive could actuate Lindsay; never having known the want of aught that money could procure, the idea that any one should take a particular course for the purpose of obtaining wealth was far from entering her mind. Of course she knew that there were plenty of people in the world forced to work for their daily bread, but it did not occur to her that want of money could possibly be the motive power of any of the people with whom she was likely to come in contact. Little chance was there then of her imagining it of her own cousin, more especially as, having, unknown to herself, fallen in love with him, she was unwittingly surrounding him with a halo of romance.

How truly marvelous is the power which the young possess of idealizing and embellishing everything and every one with whom they come in contact! They suffer for it, of course, when the process of inevitable disenchantment begins, but until that time arrives they live surrounded by a glamour as of Fairyland.

Hyacinth, as we have seen, was prepared to receive Lindsay with the reverence due to a hero, and when the dawning of love was added to hero-worship, it was not wonderful she should persuade herself he was a Paladin, and be blind to any symptoms he might evince of natural fallibility.

Christian never once troubled herself to think of Lindsay, which, considering the attention he had lavished upon her, was decidedly ungrateful; but she was too indignant at the conduct of Ralph Gordon to have much space left for other thoughts. She was by nature shy and reserved, and cherished somewhat peculiar and perhaps exaggerated notions as to the amount of courtship necessary before a man should dare to mention marriage to a woman. She had always secretly determined that she would never unwooed be won, and was deeply mortified at finding herself the object of a proposal from a man absolutely unknown to her four days before. That she, who had ever scoffed at the mere idea of love at first sight, and had always maintained in argument with Hyacinth that long acquaintance and mutual esteem were the only roots from which love could possibly spring, should be warmly adjured to give herself for life to a mere stranger—to one who had ridiculed and absolutely "chaffed" her cherished theories, and who yet had the audacity to profess himself her devoted adorer—

mortified, distressed, and amazed her beyond measure. She had paused, utterly unable to find words in which adequately to express her astonishment and indignation, and he had taken the opportunity to speak words that would utterly have ruined his prospects had she ever dreamed of hesitation. For while she paused in bewilderment, he had seized her hand, and exclaiming, "My own, my darling Christian—Christian Gordon—how musical it sounds!" he had endeavored to embrace her.

Christian rose, slowly, steadily, and majestically.

"Christian Ettrick forever, so far as you are concerned, Captain Gordon," she said, coldly, and swept away from him to join, for protection, Lindsay and Hyacinth. But she was far indeed from feeling composed.

As if such a precipitate proposal were not insult enough, he had adverted to the very point which made her sometimes declare to herself that nothing should ever induce her to marry—the necessary change of name, which she chose to consider as a symbol of the subjection and consequent degradation of women.

"But if you are part of your husband you must be called by his name," Hyacinth would urge whenever, which was very rarely, Christian succeeded in seducing her into argument. No, Christian either could not or would not see it, and would treat her sister to eloquent harangues on the indignity of the custom, at which Hyacinth would first laugh and then yawn.

"Christian Gordon, indeed!" so ran Christian's thoughts for the rest of the evening; "a fine inducement, truly! As if it were not quite enough to make me refuse any one I knew and esteemed, if he were suddenly to remind me of the necessary humiliation! But a man I had literally never seen before last Tuesday! Such impertinence! as if I didn't know quite well that what he wanted was Ettrick, and not me! Thank heavens! he goes to-morrow."

Lindsay's devotion had not struck her in the least, and although pleased with the attention of the bouquet she attached no special importance to it. He seemed to have been appointed by her father to be her shadow that week; he had taken her in to dinner each night, and had opened the ball with her; doubtless it was quite right that their nearest relative, the heir to her father's title, should do so, and she thought no more of it, and took no heed of the number of times she

danced with him; she seemed better acquainted with him than with any one else, and he was a refuge from Captain Gordon. It never occurred to her, ready as she was to believe herself sought from mercenary motives, to attribute such to her cousin; she had no idea of what her father's fortune might be, nor of what proportion of it would pass to Lindsay with Glen Ettrick; in fact, like so many others, she looked abroad for the danger of which, at home, she stood absolutely in the presence. How frequently is this the case! Every care and precaution is lavished on the possible enemy without the fortress, while all the time the really redoubtable foe is tranquilly admitted to the hearth.

The general comment of the guests, when they discussed the ball next day, from the Marchioness of Elmshire at the Castle, to Dr. Wilson and his daughters at the Parsonage, was that the two Miss Ettricks had made their choice. There was not a dissentient voice as to the propriety of Christian's selection. "So natural"—"So charming to join the two properties"—"Such a nice thing that Ettrick should remain in the family, even though it was not an old place; still, Miss Ettrick had known no other." Such were some of the opinions passed upon it.

As to Hyacinth's supposed choice, there was hardly such unanimity.

"Mr. Lambert was a great flirt"—this from a lady whose eldest daughter had fondly hoped to be mistress of Stanham, her heart being by no means untouched by its owner's honeyed speeches. "Perhaps, after all, there was nothing in it."

"Nothing in it! my dear Mrs. Lenny, why she danced with him seven times, and sat I don't know how long in the conservatory!"

"Still, he is such a flirt, and she is very new to the world."

"Oh, I take it she is something of a flirt too. I believe Stanham is very heavily encumbered?"

"Yes; he gives that as a reason for giving up the hounds," said another lady.

"Yes, so tiresome! and there seems some difficulty about another master. Really it is very inconsiderate of him; he might just as well have kept them two more seasons, and then Lord Markham would have taken them when he came of age."

"Perhaps he really could not afford it. Miss Hyacinth's

fortune will be an object to him, I should think; do you know what she will have?"

"No, but of course something handsome, to counterbalance the estate."

"She is very pretty."

"*Do* you think so? Such a *retroussé* nose! and did you ever see anything so eccentric as all those curls streaming over her shoulders?"

"The diamonds were splendid."

"Yes, but quite unsuited to a girl; and didn't you think it bad taste her wearing flowers to match her name? Rather *prononcé?*"

"I don't know, I thought her very pretty."

"Well, I should rather call her a gentleman's beauty myself, and she seems so wild. However, of course what Mr. Lambert cares for is her fortune. He is wise to secure her at once. They are sure to be run after."

Which last observation was extremely unfair to Wilfred Lambert. He had fallen thoroughly and genuinely in love with Hyacinth herself, and had not, as yet, given one thought to her possible fortune. Of course it would be ridiculous to imagine that when the idea did occur to him he would like her the less for it. We fancy that it is only in books written by very sentimental young ladies that a man considers it any defect in a woman that she should possess a fortune, although her possession of it may have nothing whatever to do with the attraction which she has for him. As we have said, he had fallen very genuinely in love, and as he drove back to Stanham that morning he flattered himself, as he thought over the events of the ball, that his sentiments were certainly reciprocated. Hyacinth's manner had been quite warm enough to deceive any one who did not give due weight to the fact that this was in effect her first glimpse of the world, and that she had never had any opportunity of observing the manners of other people. But these reflections were scarcely likely to occur to a young man, still less to one who had been the object of so flattering a welcome, and who naturally never imagined that it was the dawning of love for another that had caused the young lady to be so *empressé* towards himself. Many and many a love-affair had entered into Wilfred Lambert's past life, but his fancies had generally been transient, and even

when they had been more enduring his poverty had been a complete bar to their successful issue. Now things were changed. It was true that Stanham was heavily encumbered, and that prudence and economy were most necessary; still, he was well enough off to marry when and whom he chose. It was while reflecting upon this, and upon the difference of his feelings towards Hyacinth from those he had ever experienced for any other woman, that the thought of her possible fortune first occurred to him. Well, it would be most useful; knowing perfectly well that he loved her for herself, it did not strike him as necessary to protest, either to himself or to others, that he was sorry for it, that he would have preferred that she should have nothing, or any of the other stock expressions of the real fortune-hunter. It does really seem somewhat absurd to hear men profess, as some are so fond of doing, that "they hate an heiress," or that "nothing should induce them to marry a woman with money," when they are all the time well aware that no persuasion could induce them to marry without; and indeed that, having none themselves, it would be impossible that they should do so. Wilfred Lambert accepted Hyacinth's possible fortune as part of herself with perfect composure; it would be very acceptable, but it did not long occupy his mind, which was full of perfections and fascinations. How mortified he would have been could he have known that, after the first feelings of gratified vanity at his unmistakable admiration, she had never once given him a thought, but was endeavoring to recall Lindsay's every word and look, and vainly puzzling herself as to why he had deserted her and so evidently preferred Christian.

Lady Tynedale felt sorely perplexed the next morning whether, before her departure, it would be well to say a few words of warning, as to her extreme encouragement of Mr. Lambert, to the young cousin to whom she had taken so great a fancy; but Mrs. Ettrick, who had noticed her anxious glances at Hyacinth the preceding evening, had no wish that the warning should be given, and artfully contrived to keep Lady Tynedale engaged until the last moment. Uncertain whether her admonition would have been taken in good part, Lady Tynedale, as she drove away, hardly knew whether or not to regret her silence; but when, on turning out of the lodge gates, she encountered Wilfred Lambert, evidently on his way to call at

the Hall, she felt as if she had neglected a positive duty, and took herself severely to task. She felt a very strong prepossession against the young master of Stanham—why, she could hardly have told, but it was one that increased each time she saw him. Helen Tynedale had a strong belief in physiognomy, not as a science, for of that she knew nothing, but as a means by which certain views of character, rarely erroneous, were vouchsafed to her. And she fancied that she read in Wilfred Lambert's countenance that he was of a passionate and selfish disposition, one who would never hesitate to sacrifice another to the gratification of his own wishes.

In this she was not far from the truth. He had been brought up under great disadvantages—his mother had died at his birth, and a self-indulgent father, struggling on narrow means, had constantly instilled into his mind that the only thing worth living for was enjoyment, and had made him long passionately for the wealth that afforded the only means of obtaining it. Under the circumstances, it was wonderful that riches were not more constantly in his thoughts, but he had been carefully instructed to snatch every pleasure and gratification he possibly could, unmindful of the cost to others, such a course being justified by the thought of how few enjoyments ever came within his reach. Small wonder that, under such teaching, he should have grown up both self-indulgent and unscrupulous.

CHAPTER VIII.

"They thought that she was happy,
For she bravely bore her part
Of this world's keenest anguish,
But they could not see her heart.

"They little knew the hours,
Bowed down by pain and care,
That she had wept alone;
Ah! no—they were not there."

If Wilfred Lambert, when he drove over to Ettrick, had entertained any hope of a *tête-à-tête* with Hyacinth, he was doomed to disappointment. Sir Loudoun, Mrs. Ettrick, Lindsay, and Christian were all present, and all seemed in the half-bored, half-fatigued state that was hardly unnatural after the exertions and excitements of the past week. Mrs. Ettrick exerted herself, as she well knew how, to be pleasant; this young man was far too valuable an ally to be lost sight of. Sir Loudoun was civil, but he evidently rather wondered why his guest had come, and still more when he would go away. Lindsay, remembering the warm welcome accorded to Wilfred by Hyacinth the night before, hated him bitterly; though he might not woo her himself, he was frantic at the thought that any other man should do so, and felt as savage as only a jealous lover can. Christian regarded him with supreme indifference, and Hyacinth had been made so miserable during the morning by Lindsay's persistent devotion to Christian, that she welcomed him with an eagerness that delighted him, amazed her father, scandalized her aunt, even though it served her own ends, and drove Lindsay to the verge of distraction.

When Wilfred Lambert chose to take the trouble, he could generally make any one like him, and it is needless to say that he exerted himself to the utmost on the present occasion. It was, of course, impossible to mollify Lindsay, who preserved the coldest and most distant demeanor, but he was the member of the party for whose good opinion he cared the least.

Mrs. Ettrick was, of course, ready to be pleased, and was

additionally propitiated by being given tidings of a fashionable marriage of which she had not yet heard. Christian brightened at the sight of a new pamphlet in favor of female suffrage, and endeavored to induce their new acquaintance to avow himself a champion of the cause; but this he dexterously avoided, declaring, however, with an air of conviction, that "there was a great deal in" the pamphlet; which satisfied her, as she did not hear the mental reservation, "a great deal of idiotic trash." Then he turned to Sir Loudoun, and talked of the surrounding country, and the rides, and of his regret at having to give up the hounds, till his host became quite cordial, and proposed a visit to the stables.

"Oh! I'll come too, and show you Bay Charmer," cried Hyacinth, springing up.

"And I must show you Progress," said Christian, more quietly.

Who does not know how time flies in a visit to the stables, the many stories and incidents that have to be related respecting the achievements and the antecedents of the occupant of each stall or box? Sir Loudoun, although he seldom or never rode, was fond and proud of his horses, and passed a considerable amount of time in his stables; he was therefore delighted to find some one equally fond of them, and time passed quickly and unnoticed, till Christian suddenly exclaimed, with amazement, that it was nearly seven o'clock. Mr. Lambert sprang up from the corn-bin on which he was seated.

"I am quite shocked at having paid you such a visitation! Sir Loudoun, may I ask for my dog-cart?"

"By no means," said Sir Loudoun, who was in the midst of the pedigree of a favorite mare, and did not wish to be disturbed. "Stay and dine with us. Oh! never mind dressing, the ladies will excuse you. We are only a quiet family party."

And, nothing loth, Wilfred Lambert consented, and presently found himself once more conducting Hyacinth to the dining-room. Could it really be only four days since he had done so before?—since he had talked to her for the first time? It seemed almost incredible, as if he must have known her for months, if not for years. The secret between them had given an immense impetus to their friendship. Friendship!—ah! too well he knew that, on his side, at least, it was

a far warmer feeling. Could he feel confident that it was so on hers? He thought so, and yet—he was not wont to be diffident of his own powers of pleasing—she had certainly given him every encouragement; he had no suspicion of any rival, for she had, he knew, had no opportunities of seeing any one until this week; and at the ball she had certainly allowed him to monopolize her; and yet he could not feel that calm certainty of success that he was wont to feel in similar circumstances.

Half a dozen girls at least could have told, had they chosen, how Wilfred Lambert had said everything to them except the words they longed to hear. He had approached as near to them as was well possible,—but they had remained unspoken. And in all these cases he had invariably preserved a serene complacency, and had never once doubted the result, the answer that would be returned to him if he vouchsafed the important question. But now it was far otherwise. He felt, without knowing why, insecure, uncertain whether Hyacinth's graciousness really meant all that it seemed to convey, and quite ignorant as to how advances such as he was accustomed to make would be received.

Of Lindsay as a possible rival he never once thought—it seemed so clear that he had made up his mind to marry Christian, and it was so obviously a wise family arrangement, smiled upon and encouraged by the two elders of the party, that it never entered his mind that he cared for Hyacinth. How indeed should it? All seemed so smooth and so auspicious in that quarter that there was nothing to arouse his suspicions.

Certainly it did strike him that Lindsay was decidedly sullen, and seemed but little disposed to fraternize with him, but, never having met him before, he took it for granted that such was his usual manner, and never gave him a second thought. Of course in such a small party *tête-à-tête* conversation was impossible, and he took every opportunity of making himself agreeable to Sir Loudoun and Mrs. Ettrick, feeling duly grateful to that lady for the marked encouragement she gave him. They all left the table together, and the May evening being exceptionally soft and warm, the young people strolled out on the terrace in the moonlight.

"What a night for music!" said Wilfred. "Miss Ettrick, you confessed to singing. Do give us a ballad now."

"Thank you," said Hyacinth, laughing; "but perhaps you may remember I particularly said I never sang when any one was listening."

"Why don't you sing that thing about Helen you sang when you were rowing me the other day?" said Lindsay, unable to resist the temptation of demonstrating to Mr. Lambert that he had been favored; but Hyacinth, angry with herself for caring about him, as she could no longer conceal from herself that she did, was in no humor to be civil, and replied, carelessly,—

"Oh! but then you're one of the family, and don't count."

Lindsay bit his lip, and wished he had held his tongue. Wilfred Lambert tried again.

"I wish you would consider me 'no one,' and sing, if it be only one verse," he said, persuasively. "I must be starting almost immediately, and it would be so kind to give me a refrain to remember all the way home."

"Sing 'Douglas,' Hyacinth," said Christian. "It suits your voice better than anything else."

"Too dismal," said Hyacinth. "Mr. Lambert wants something to hum going home, and would hardly thank me for anything so melancholy."

"Nay, I will thank *you* for anything," said Wilfred, in a very low tone, meant for her ear alone, but Lindsay overheard it, and ground his heel into the gravel-walk, with a muttered oath at "the fellow's insolence."

Hyacinth blushed deeply, but she affected not to hear, and said,—

"Well, I will sing you 'Lochinvar' on one condition—that you sing us a song afterwards."

"With such an inducement, I will do my best, but I really cannot promise you anything very harmonious."

Hyacinth had not a very remarkable voice, but it was rich and sweet, and admirably adapted to ballad-singing. When she had finished, she cut short Mr. Lambert's raptures by a demand for the fulfillment of his promise. Had Wilfred Lambert's voice been cultivated it would have been an exceptionally fine one—as it was, it was deep and full, and well suited to the Venetian barcarolle which he selected.

"I call that real singing," said Hyacinth, when he had finished. "Do give us another." And, nothing loth, he sang

"My Queen," driving Lindsay well-nigh frantic by the meaning glances which he cast at Hyacinth, to whom indeed the words "her ringlets' sheen" were specially appropriate.

It was late before the dog-cart was at length brought round, and ere he departed Mr. Lambert had persuaded Sir Loudoun and Mrs. Ettrick to promise that the whole party should go over and lunch at Stanham on the Tuesday.

"You need not have promised for me," said Lindsay to his mother, as he followed her into her room. "I'm not going to lunch with that free-and-easy snob, I can tell you."

"Nonsense, my dear boy! Of course you will escort your cousins, who will probably ride. I do not see anything objectionable about Mr. Lambert; he strikes me as being a very agreeable young man, and I think he will be a most suitable match for Hyacinth."

"So he seems to think. Hang his impudence!"

"My dear Lindsay, do pray be more reasonable. As you are going to marry Christian, it cannot matter to you whether Hyacinth marries Mr. Lambert or any one else. I am sure I am quite thankful that it is not she who is your destined wife. Such conduct as hers last night I never beheld. Of course her training has been very bad; still, Christian has not suffered in a similar manner from the very same disadvantages."

"Christian is half crazy, I think. She wants a vote, and I believe does not despair of being in Parliament some day. Fancy me tied for life to one of the 'shrieking sisterhood!'"

"When you are tired, of course you will put a stop to such rubbish. Besides, no married woman who has a grain of sense ever joins that clique. It is generally soured spinsters who go in for that sort of thing, and occasionally a few silly girls, who like to talk of things they do not understand. Christian will grow like other people when she marries, whereas I greatly fear Hyacinth's flirting propensities are likely to increase. 'Really, she seems as wild as a hawk,' Lady Pynsent said last night. It appears there is some story of her having joined the hounds quite alone one day, and I suppose that accounts for her extreme intimacy with Mr. Lambert, which could scarcely be the result of their ostensible meetings. Doubtless she has often gone out on the sly.

Your uncle has no notion—naturally enough—of taking care of young girls."

"You seem to have taken an extraordinary dislike to her," said Lindsay, bitterly.

"Not I," said his mother, unclasping her bracelets. "Of course I regret her making herself conspicuous; it is bad style, and one would rather not have that sort of thing in the family. Still her tactics seem to have succeeded, for I am fully persuaded that Mr. Lambert is quite in earnest this time (though I am told he bears the character of a desperate flirt); and if he likes such a wife as Hyacinth, it is no part of my business to mar a very suitable match by interference. Were it otherwise, I should of course give her the benefit of a little advice; but as it is, I am only too thankful that the sister who is to be your wife is so different. I suppose you saw Captain Gordon's discomfiture last night?"

"Yes." Lindsay remembered vividly what a pleasant *tête-à-tête* it was that Christian, escaping from her adorer, had interrupted. "It served him right, confounded puppy! I am sure she gave him no encouragement."

"By no means; she behaved with the best possible judgment. You know, Lindsay, that I never have a very high opinion of what you call love-matches; still, as your marriage will be one of convenience rather than of inclination, it is fortunate that Christian is so steady—it will leave you so much more freedom."

"Hang it, mother!—I *hate* her!"

"But you cannot afford to hate eight thousand pounds a year. My dear boy, I wish with all my heart that you were free to choose, but you know perfectly well that you are not, and there really is no use in railing against fate; better get the business over as soon as possible. Your leave expires the end of the month, and you ought to be engaged and able to send in your papers by that time."

"Send in my papers!"

"Of course. You don't surely imagine that Sir Loudoun would permit his heiress to follow the drum from one country quarter to another? Now pray, Lindsay, don't pretend to make a grievance out of that. I am sure I have heard you execrate the service, and the hard fate that bound you to it, times without number."

Yes, Lindsay could not deny it; still, with the usual contradictoriness of human nature, when it was represented to him as compulsory that he should leave the army, he felt most devotedly attached to it, and persuaded himself that to become a general had been the fervent desire of his whole life. It was most aggravating to him to be unable to gainsay any of his mother's assumptions, but to do so was, he confessed to himself, impossible.

He reflected bitterly, as he sat that night smoking in solitude, on the folly which had hampered him with debt, and rendered it imperative that Christian, and not Hyacinth, should be his choice. But then he turned to thoughts of Hyacinth. Was it so sure, even had he been free, that she would have cared for him? He felt by no means certain, and yet for those first four-and-twenty hours before Christian's heiress-ship had been proclaimed, she had seemed quite willing to accept his attentions. Since then dire necessity had forced him to mask his real sentiments, and to profess others which he was far from feeling; still, that half-hour in the conservatory, she had seemed as cordial as at first. Perhaps—if he could but think so, he would,—but as wild ideas of sacrificing all for love, and marrying his younger cousin, in spite of all his mother could, and certainly would, do and say, passed through his brain, the remembrance of Hyacinth's encouragement of Mr. Lambert the night before, and of her reception of him that very afternoon, came upon him with a species of electric shock. He had seen her give Wilfred Lambert one or two glances that, to his mind, certainly implied one of two things —either she was really very much in love with him, or else she was "an out-and-out flirt." It never dawned upon him —so completely was money the hinge upon which his own life turned—that it was possible that Hyacinth should misconstrue the transfer of his attentions to her sister; he presumed that the motive of his courtship of Christian must be patent to every one, save, indeed, the girl herself, who, he felt comfortably persuaded, must be too well satisfied with his preference to question its cause.

It would have surprised him beyond expression if he could have been indulged with a peep into the minds of his two cousins. He would have found Christian, far from dreaming tenderly of his soft speeches, seated at her writing-table, with

the pamphlet on female suffrage before her, her left hand supporting her head and buried in the masses of her dark hair. her right armed with a pencil, to mark the passages she deemed worthy of approval. There was but slight chance that dreams of love should find a place in her brain while metal so infinitely more attractive was before her.

Christian had argued herself into the firm belief that women were by very far indeed the intellectual superiors of men. She had talked to but few men in her life. Certainly a clever man had never yet appeared above her horizon, and she had but a dim idea as to what such a one would be like. She had read none but one-sided arguments, never having cared to study any aspect of the question save that which pleased her fancy; and she was to the full as impatient as young people generally are of any contradiction. She was forced, indeed, reluctantly to allow that men had the advantage in physical strength, but she was quite ready to affirm that this was chiefly owing to their superior training. In short, she was as illogical, and as ready and eager to talk nonsense upon her special hobby, as any other of the weak and vain women to whose "union" the pamphlet gave her an additional inducement to belong. For the first time, the thought that she was of age brought to her the idea of independent action. Surely she might now join any association she pleased; she was no longer a child in the eyes of the law—no one could have a right to say her nay. Rather a different frame of mind from that blissful thankfulness for his preference in which Lindsay fondly believed she was indulging—indeed, one as little favorable to matrimony as could well be imagined.

Hyacinth was sitting by her window overlooking the moonlit lake. Hot tears were stealing down her cheeks, and falling, much to his annoyance, on the head of the Skye terrier nestled in her arms. Wilfred Lambert would have been sorely discomfited could he have seen those tears, and have realized their cause—the sad conviction that Lindsay's first appearance of caring for her had been delusive, and that he loved, not her, but Christian. It would have been a sore mortification to find that, just as his heart had been really touched for the first time, he had apparently lost the power of touching that of another. It would indeed have been a bitter blow could he have fathomed her thoughts, and known that, save

as a means of concealing her affection for her cousin, he never once entered her mind.

Hyacinth Ettrick was endowed with very deep and warm feelings—far too deep and warm, indeed, for her to hope to pass peacefully through life. She loved Lindsay, notwithstanding their short acquaintance, very dearly; and it required all the pride she could summon to her aid to enable her to bear the thought of seeing him devoted to her sister. Would Christian care for him? That was a question which greatly puzzled her, and which she was forced to confess herself unable to answer. Christian had, it was true, always declaimed vehemently against marriage, and Hyacinth well knew that she meant what she said; still, it seemed to her impossible that Lindsay could woo in vain. Then an agony of shame at having given her heart unsought came over her, and the tears fell faster and faster yet on Scamp's devoted head.

It was then that the thought of Wilfred Lambert occurred to her, with the hope that the attention he had paid her might have diverted notice from the chagrin she feared she must have shown at Lindsay's neglect. Of the effect upon him of her encouragement she did not think—indeed, she was too much occupied with her own sorrows to have much consideration to spare for the possible woes of others. Upon one point she was firmly determined—that, suffer as she might, Lindsay should never guess her feelings, or know that she had ever cared in the slightest degree for him. And still more carefully, she told herself, must she hide the state of her heart from Christian—from the dear sister from whom she had never had the shadow of a secret, save the one relating to her unpremeditated day's hunting. It seemed to her impossible that Lindsay should sue in vain, and she was determined that Christian should be spared the pain of knowing that her happiness was purchased at her sister's expense. She knew her own happiness would be irretrievably marred if it cost Christian a single pang, and gave her sister credit for the same warm and generous feelings which she herself possessed.

She thought once more, after she had at length left the window and sought her couch, of Wilfred Lambert. Under the circumstances, it was, she reflected, really exceptionally fortunate that there should be some one so willing to talk to her, and so save her from the disagreeable alternative of being

always *en tiers* with the lovers, or else of making them conspicuous by keeping markedly aloof. As we said before, it never occurred to her to think what the consequences might be to him; she was not conceited, or at all apt to consider herself charming; she had seen too little of the world to be aware of her own powers of fascination, and the secret between her and Mr. Lambert, trivial as it was, had been the occasion of an intimacy greater than weeks without it would probably have effected.

Great would have been her dismay had she known that any tidings of her escapade had reached her aunt's ears. To Mrs. Ettrick, predisposed and determined to think her niece "wild," the hunting episode (mentioned by a lady, herself a great rider, who had become cognizant of it through the openly-expressed admiration of the huntsman for Hyacinth's riding), had not appeared anything very surprising, though she had not failed to make use of it in depreciating his cousin to Lindsay; but she was quite sure the girl must know that it would be very displeasing to her father, or she would never have kept it a secret. She felt no inclination, however, to reveal it; it would annoy Sir Loudoun, and his displeasure would more than probably include the person who had told him what he disliked to hear, and might thereby mar Mrs. Ettrick's well-conceived plans.

As Mrs. Ettrick reviewed matters that night, she felt well satisfied with the progress that they were making; Hyacinth was most obligingly playing into her hands by her warm encouragement of Mr. Lambert, of which it very naturally did not occur to her aunt to doubt the genuineness. It would be a most suitable marriage. Hyacinth's fortune, whatever it might ultimately prove to be, would be an assistance to a man with an encumbered property like Stanham, and it was no part of her business to inquire whether it would prove sufficient for the purpose. The field was clear for Lindsay with Christian, whose demeanor, and manner of rejecting Captain Gordon, were most satisfactory. Lastly, Sir Loudoun seemed so cordial, so unlike what he had been on the occasion of her last visit many years before, that she indulged considerable hopes of being invited to remain, and take charge of his establishment, when both his daughters married. She desired this for two reasons: first, it would be pleasanter to be the virtual mis-

tress of Ettrick, with every luxury at her command, than to return to the rigid economy of her tiny *ménage;* secondly, and this was the more important motive, she deemed it wise to keep an eye on Sir Loudoun.

It was true, she argued to herself, that he was not very likely to marry again; he had lived utterly without society ever since his wife's death, and would probably relapse into his old habits when exertion was no longer imperatively demanded on his daughters' behalf. Still, she felt she should not be thoroughly comfortable if she again lost sight of him; there was no knowing what might happen, and if he were to marry and have a son, farewell to Christian's heiress-ship. Had she known Sir Loudoun better, she need hardly have disquieted herself. This return to society for the sake of his girls had been a tremendous exertion to him, and he did not disguise from himself that it would be a relief to him if they both married early, and enabled him to resume the solitary habits that had become second nature to him.

Of asking Mrs. Ettrick to take charge of his house, he never once dreamed; indeed, though more cordial to her than on the occasion of her previous visit, it was less from liking her better than from the fact that she could no longer give offense by implying that his adored wife, whom he saw with agony fading away before his eyes, was "fanciful," and would be well if she chose to think so. But of this his sister-in-law was blissfully unaware, and cherished the belief that all was arranging itself according to her most sanguine wishes.

CHAPTER IX.

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind."
A Midsummer Night's Dream.

It was with considerable anxiety that Wilfred Lambert looked at the sky and the clouds on Tuesday morning. He had longed to invent some excuse for going over to Ettrick on one of the days that had intervened since he had dined there

on the Saturday, but he had not ventured to do so. He was, for the first time in his life, thoroughly and heartily in earnest, and he was himself fairly astonished at the difference in his feelings. In all his many previous flirtations, diffidence had certainly never been one of his characteristics; and it was a new and surprising sensation to find himself actually doubting the advisability of doing what he wished.

Wilfred Lambert, hitherto the coolest and most audacious of flirts, was now, when touched by the Ithuriel spear of a true love, absolutely and undeniably shy. He felt bewildered and almost irritated by such a new sensation; he vowed to himself that he would ride over to Ettrick on some pretext—a pamphlet for Christian, a ballad for Hyacinth, some piece of news for Mrs. Ettrick; but all these excuses, any one of which he would, in ordinary cases, have considered ample warrant for appearing where and when he liked, and for passing the whole day in the company of the Cynthia of the minute, now seemed to him too hopelessly transparent, and he spent the intervening days wandering about in a restless and perturbed manner.

His old housekeeper marveled greatly what had come to her young master, who so rarely troubled himself or her respecting any arrangements, even when friends were staying with him. Contradictory orders about Tuesday's luncheon reached her every hour, as a new idea struck her master of some dish of which he had seen Hyacinth partake, or of some other for which Mrs. Ettrick had evinced a predilection.

But at length the time drew very near, and, punctual to the hour mentioned, Sir Loudoun and Mrs. Ettrick drove up to the door. Wilfred's heart almost stood still—was this all? Where were the other members of the party? But as he was disquieting himself with the agonizing thought that perhaps, after all, Hyacinth might not come, the riding-party appeared in sight, making their way leisurely across the park under the spreading oaks. How very slowly they advanced! Still, it was a relief to see that she was there, and he turned to welcome Sir Loudoun and Mrs. Ettrick with a better grace than he could otherwise have commanded, though he detained them in conversation on the steps, that he might be at hand to assist Hyacinth to dismount. Sir Loudoun thought this detention at the door somewhat strange, but Mrs. Ettrick at once fath-

omed its motive, and welcomed it as a fresh sign that all was progressing as she wished.

Stanham was not a very large or particularly handsome house, but it looked unmistakably old. It was built of red brick, much faded and weather-stained, with dressings of white stone; and the door was approached by a wide flight of shallow steps, on the heavy balustrades of which two or three gorgeous peacocks were sunning themselves. A considerable portion of the house was covered with ivy, closely trimmed, well relieving, with its deep glossy green, the rich coloring of the brick-work and the many hues of the lichen-covered tile-roof. The stone-paved hall was evidently the living-room of its possessor; his double-barreled guns and his rifle were carefully placed in a rack on one wall; riding-, driving-, and hunting-whips occupied a considerable space on another; while foxes' heads and brushes, stags' antlers, and various curious ornithological specimens—such as a hoopoe, a waxbill chatterer, a white blackbird, and many others—were disposed on every side. The table was covered with sporting literature—*Bell's Life*, the *Field*, and the *Racing Calendar* being conspicuous. The chairs were either ordinary high-backed hall-chairs, or else huge recesses of leather or straw; and the floor, where it was carpeted at all, was covered with matting, with deerskins strewn every here and there, and with a large bearskin hearth-rug in front of the huge fireplace.

Until this Tuesday morning the hall had seemed to Wilfred the very perfection of comfort; in it he always lived, and never saw either library or drawing-room from one week's end to another. But with the expectation of a visit from Hyacinth all was at once changed. The hall seemed by no means a fit or worthy apartment in which to receive her, accustomed as she was to the innumerable prettinesses and refinements of her own home; so he had caused the drawing-room to be opened, little knowing how infinitely preferable is the humblest and roughest room, which looks as if it were lived in, to the most magnificent saloon that appears cold and stiff, as if kept only for state occasions.

Some dim feeling of this did cross his mind as he pushed the heavy crimson brocade chairs and sofas from one place to another, in the vain attempt to make the room look less stiff and formal; but it did not occur to him that the best plan

would be to welcome his guests in the hall, and not profess to live in a room which he really never entered. Even had it looked more as if it were lived in, the smell so inseparable from an uninhabited room, and not to be dispelled by open windows, would have betrayed him; and, warm as was the day, neither Mrs. Ettrick nor Hyacinth could repress a slight shiver at the chilly aspect of the apartment. It was as well that their host did not perceive this, or, in his anxiety for their comfort, he would have sacrificed the pink and yellow atrocity with which the old housekeeper had, as she fondly imagined, beautified the fireplace, and have insisted upon at once lighting a fire, which, as there had not been one there for more than a year, would in all probability have been productive of more smoke than warmth.

"What a pretty view!" said Mrs. Ettrick, more, probably, for something to say than for any other reason, for the landscape was commonplace enough, and was indeed only redeemed from positive ugliness by an avenue of fine oaks.

The observation served its purpose, however, of setting the conversation fairly afloat, and in a very short time luncheon was announced. The dining-room was a really fine apartment, paneled with oak, and having a good collection of family portraits, besides a very fine picture of a dead stag and other game, with a deer-hound on guard, by Weenix, over the fireplace.

"How like Ronald! He might have sat for it," was Hyacinth's immediate exclamation.

"Hardly handsome enough," said Wilfred, willing to exalt Ronald's beauties, if he could thereby please his mistress, and not unmindful of the shrewd saying of the old proverb. "Ronald's head is far finer."

"I should have thought it impossible to find a handsomer deer-hound than that picture," said Lindsay, who could no longer leave Wilfred uncontradicted.

But his contradiction fell flat. Wilfred was in a state of far too great beatitude at having Hyacinth absolutely under his own roof for any words but hers to have power to move him.

"I cannot say how kind I think it of you to come in this rough, unceremonious way," he began, when the servant, who united the avocations of valet, butler, and stud-groom, had

withdrawn. "It is the first time that I have had the pleasure of welcoming any ladies at Stanham."

"You need hardly call your hospitality rough," said Sir Loudoun. "I'll trouble you for a little more chicken-pie. The cook who made that deserves a medal!"

"I want to lionize the hall," said Hyacinth. "I caught a glimpse of a stuffed bird there that seemed to me the exact counterpart of one I saw at home about a fortnight ago."

"What was it like?"

"Well, it was a sort of brownish yellow, with something like a tuft of feathers on its head."

"Exactly. It is the same I have stuffed—the hoopoe. Will you come and look at it now?"

A move was made to the hall, and the formal drawing-room was not again revisited.

"Now let us see the gardens," Hyacinth had said, and though Wilfred had averred that he feared there was nothing to see, they had started forthwith.

It was true that flower-garden, strictly speaking, there was none; but there were flower-borders all through the kitchen-garden, giving ample promise of abundance of sweet, old-fashioned flowers before very long. A broad grass walk divided the garden into four equal parts, and in the centre was a magnificent cedar, which must have stood there for many a long year before the garden was made or the house built.

"How delicious this must be on a hot summer's day! Do you come and read here?" asked Christian.

Wilfred laughed.

"I am afraid my studies are hardly very profound, Miss Ettrick. I sit here a good deal, certainly, and——"

"Smoke and think," said Hyacinth; "it would be a charming place to dream."

Wilfred longed to tell her how fervently he hoped that it might, one day, be hers to dream under; but even had they been alone he hardly, as yet, felt sure enough of his ground to venture to do so. True, he felt as if he had known and loved her for months, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that it was but one short week since he first had been introduced to her. Could he venture to hope that love had been as sudden and as undoubted with her as it had been with him? Even if he dared to hope that such was the case,

would she not think him strangely precipitate if he spoke so soon? Nay, would she not in all probability resent being defrauded of the privilege, so dear to her sex, of being wooed? No—the time for speech had not yet arrived; he must be content to wait, and trust that his evident worship would make her answer a certainty when the time came for him to put the momentous question.

All this was passing through his mind as he laughingly pleaded guilty to the charge of smoking, and expressed a hope that the whole party would come over again during the summer, and partake of strawberries and cream in the "cedar parlor."

They had sat for some time under the tree, and Mrs. Ettrick rose to return to the house. She and Wilfred had had the major portion of the conversation to themselves, with just a few interludes on Hyacinth's part. Sir Loudoun seldom talked much, and had amused himself by a voyage of critical observation among the fruit-trees; Christian had been indulging in a day-dream of what the world might be were women allowed their proper place and influence; and Lindsay was far too sulky, and too much occupied in lamenting his own hard fate, to be inclined to disturb her meditations.

Wilfred sauntered back to the house by Hyacinth's side, and then suddenly proposed that they should go to the stables. Mrs. Ettrick preferred to go in and rest, but the remainder of the party accompanied him, and were soon making the acquaintance of the hunters.

"What a beauty!" exclaimed Hyacinth, as the last box was opened and a handsome black horse turned, and after an inquiring look came forward, and began rubbing its nose on its master's shoulder; "it's the one you rode——"

"The longest and hardest days all through the season," said Wilfred, hastening to cover her confusion at having so nearly betrayed her secret, for she had been about to say "the day I was out."

"He doesn't look up to much weight," said Lindsay, unable to resist the opportunity, so tempting to the masculine mind, of decrying another man's horse.

"He is a stone and a half above mine," answered Wilfred, carelessly; "see, Miss Ettrick, how determined he is to have his treat; he knows I always have a piece of bread for him."

"Will he eat sugar?" said Hyacinth, feeling in her pocket, and stroking the glossy black neck.

"Of course he will! he likes everything good, don't you, Othello, old boy? See how gently he takes it."

"Can he jump?" asked Lindsay, in a depreciatory tone, that said as plainly as if he had used the words that he was sure he could not.

"Jump!—I should just think he could. Miss Ettrick,"—turning eagerly to Hyacinth,—"you know—he can," he was about to say, but recollected himself, and went on—"what jumping is, I am sure, for I have heard of Bay Charmer's powers. I wish you could see Othello."

"Come part of the way home with us," suggested Hyacinth; "we can go round by Brymer Oaks, and that will give us a nice line across country. Do come!"

Small doubt of his accepting the invitation, when it was she who gave it. His heart beat high with exultation as he turned to order Othello to be saddled. If he could but have known that she never gave him a thought, that it had only seemed to her natural to say what she did when he expressed such a wish that she should see his horse jump! But he naturally did not know, neither did Lindsay, who turned away, furious with his cousin for giving "that fellow" such encouragement. He was determined, however, that he should not have all the enjoyment from the ride that he doubtless anticipated; and so, when Wilfred had swung Hyacinth into her saddle, and was turning to mount Othello, imagining of course that Lindsay would take charge of Christian, he found Captain Ettrick already mounted, and suggesting to his cousin that her mare was fidgety, and that they had better move on. Hyacinth hesitated, not from any thought of Wilfred, but from a feeling that Lindsay was Christian's property, and also from the conviction that if she were to overcome her affection for him, the less she saw of him, especially alone, the better. For Lindsay's voice and manner were apt to become perilously tender and caressing in *tête-à-tête*, and to have her heart made to throb by his soft speeches was hardly a good preparation for steeling it against him. But Lindsay was unaccustomed to having his will disputed, and made his horse fidget, till Bay Charmer became so impatient that Hyacinth deemed it advisable to start, while Wilfred was obliged perforce to remain

behind, to mount and escort Christian. Lindsay had no intention of being overtaken; he at once put his horse into a canter, and Wilfred had the mortification of seeing the cousins disappear among the trees just as he sprang into the saddle.

"A stern chase is a long chase," says the proverb, and so it proved in this instance. Othello had given ample evidence of his impugned jumping powers before the truants were seen standing under the clump of oaks on Brymer Common.

It was no thanks to Lindsay that they had stopped then; he would fain have pursued what was to him a very pleasant ride, if Hyacinth had not at length insisted on waiting for their companions. The time to her had been compounded of bitter pain and sweetest pleasure, the latter perhaps predominating, for it had been very hard to keep Christian's claims loyally in mind while she was listening to Lindsay. Not that he absolutely made love to her,—that would at once have shocked and startled her,—but he talked in a soft and most insidious manner, deferring in everything to her judgment and to her wishes; and, in short, making himself perilously pleasant. Hyacinth was painfully aware, when the thought of her sister at length occurred to her and she insisted upon awaiting her at Brymer Oaks, that all the stern resolves she had made to dismiss Lindsay from her mind had been of no avail—nay, that these soft speeches had not only undone her work, but had rendered it all the harder to recommence. The true state of the case did not dawn upon her, that he really loved her, and only sought Christian for her money. No, she had seen him devoted to her sister, singling her conspicuously out from all others, and naturally never dreamed of doubting that he loved her. Why should she? Guileless, innocent, and unaccustomed to worldly thoughts and actions, Hyacinth was little likely to think of money as a motive for the actions of any one connected with her. She had ever thought of love with a tremulous awe, feeling her heart throb at its very name; and to have mentioned it in the same breath with the sordid vice of avarice, generally the most despicable of passions in the eyes of the very young, would have seemed to her little short of sacrilege. But she felt that if she were to continue loyal to Christian and to avoid loving Lindsay with her whole heart, she must keep clear of the *tête-à-têtes* in which his voice grew so low and tender, and in which he talked so much more pleas-

antly than in the general circle. She had not sufficient experience to know that all people who can talk at all are invariably pleasanter in *tête-à-tête* than at any other time; she was almost inclined to resent his being so pleasant to her, as a species of treason to Christian, and made many resolutions to avoid him for the future, as they waited in silence under the oaks.

"What have you been about?" was Hyacinth's immediate greeting to Wilfred and Christian. "Mr. Lambert, I thought you came with us for the express purpose of exhibiting Othello's jumping powers. Of course, if you have followed us he must have jumped, still we should have liked to see. However, the best line now is over the common, and round by Ingleston. Come," and, nothing loth, Wilfred joined her, and they rode on, leaving Lindsay and Christian to follow at their pleasure.

Was it wonderful that Wilfred should feel elated at what seemed to him such a clear proof of preference from the woman he loved? He could not see into her heart, or feel how it ached at leaving Lindsay—how nothing but devoted love for her sister would have made her so sacrifice herself. It is somewhat difficult to say why Hyacinth had so firmly persuaded herself that Lindsay was in love with Christian, though it is easy enough to comprehend how, loving him herself, she failed to conceive the possibility of her sister being indifferent to him. But she believed herself sure that his devotion was quite undoubted, and was only anxious that no look or word of hers should betray to Lindsay, or still more to Christian, the state of her heart. Probably nothing else could have made her encourage Wilfred Lambert so much, or have rendered her so blind to his feelings or to the certainty that her conduct could have but one meaning, unqualified encouragement, in his eyes; indeed, it may be truly said that she never gave him a moment's thought, save as forming an opportune bulwark between her and her cousin.

It would perhaps have been well for all parties if the state of their minds could have been revealed to each other. Lindsay, hourly more captivated by Hyacinth, yet assiduously, save in rare moments like that just related, avoiding her and paying his court to Christian; Wilfred, fervently in love, with all the strength of his passionate, undisciplined nature; Christian, with never a thought of matrimony for herself, occupied with

her own dreams of Female Suffrage, and of availing herself of her majority to join some society (what, she hardly knew) which would publicly commit her in some way (how, she was far from sure) to her beloved doctrines of Female Equality and Women's Rights; utterly unconscious of Lindsay's courtship of herself, but keenly alive to Wilfred's love for Hyacinth, deceived into the belief that her sister returned his affection, and, conscious how widely divergent were their views of life and happiness, determined not to breathe a syllable that might bias her choice, painful as the bare thought of losing her was to herself. Hyacinth, as we have seen, sick at heart and sorrowful at Lindsay's love for another, but struggling bravely, that Christian might never guess that her happiness was blighting her twin-sister's life, and in her self-absorption ignoring Wilfred's affection, and encouraging him in every possible manner. It was altogether as complete an *imbroglio* as could well be imagined, and one not to be put straight without considerable sorrow and suffering.

It would have required, however, some such shock as a *coup d'œil* of the various states of feeling we have rapidly sketched to disturb Wilfred Lambert's felicity, when he found himself cantering with Hyacinth across the common, alone with her by her pointed and special invitation. Doubt of her encouragement being intentional naturally never struck him; why, indeed, should it? Hyacinth had never appeared in wilder spirits—sobs were so near her lips that nervous bursts of laughter were her only alternative. Bravely and resolutely turning her thoughts from her sorrow, she was yet in a feverish state widely different from her usual high spirits, and quite incapable of sustained conversation. A good gallop was the thing at that moment most congenial to her feelings, and she soon put Bay Charmer to the top of her speed.

Brymer Common was of considerable extent, affording excellent turf, springy and elastic with wild thyme; and when they came to the end of it, and, leaping a bank and ditch, started on their career across country, there was little else than grass, this portion of Elmshire being almost entirely devoted to pasture. If Lindsay had beheld their wild career, he could have entertained no further doubt as to the jumping powers of either steed, but they were out of sight before he and Christian reached the preliminary fence, and she suggested

that they might as well turn along the lanes, and meet the others at Ingleston Green—unless, indeed, he cared very much for the gallop across country. She was, she confessed, somewhat tired. Lindsay was furiously cross; though he was not to win Hyacinth himself, he grudged her to another, and was bitterly mortified by the careless manner in which she turned from him to Wilfred. It seemed hard, indeed, that the girl whom he loved should be the one to be impervious to his fascinations; so he was by no means indisposed to give up the chase; and when, on their reaching Ingleston, no sign of the truant pair was to be seen, he easily persuaded Christian, who had been brought up in too quiet and retired a manner to know the necessity of deferring in some measure to the world's opinion, that they might as well go home, and leave the others to follow at their leisure. So, in spite of Hyacinth's protestations that it was really quite unnecessary—that she could quite well find her way home from Ingleston alone—Wilfred escorted her back to Ettrick, thereby causing her aunt, who saw them from her window, to raise her eyebrows in grave surprise at her niece's forward conduct.

CHAPTER X.

> "For aught that ever I could read,
> Could ever hear by tale or history,
> The course of true love never did run smooth."
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

"WELL, Lindsay," said his mother, a week later—a week that had been full of misery to Hyacinth, who was forced to watch the love she so coveted being offered to another, and accepted apparently with pleasure, but in reality in unconsciousness, by Christian—"well, Lindsay, I really think you need hardly wait much longer. Christian must be fully aware of your intentions, and seems quite as favorable as we could wish."

"I don't see the particular use of being in such a hurry," replied her son, subsiding into the depths of an arm-chair; "there is always plenty of time to do what is disagreeable."

"Ahem! I am glad to hear you have no cause for haste. I thought two or three rather unpleasant documents had reached you lately. I am delighted to hear I was mistaken, but your countenance misled me."

"Hardly," growled Lindsay, with a muttered oath. "I must do it, I know; the duns have been pouring in pretty thick, and are becoming unpleasant. Still, you must confess it is deuced hard lines to have to marry a woman who bores one to death, when her sister is worth fifty thousand of her. But it's just my luck."

"Of course, if you are in love," remarked his mother resignedly, but with an accent of supreme contempt, "there is not the faintest use in expecting you either to talk sense or to listen to it, else I would ask you whether, even if Christian were out of the way altogether, you imagine that you would have the smallest chance of Hyacinth, who is so very openly throwing herself into Mr. Lambert's arms. If he does not propose soon, I verily believe she will ask him. Really, it is appalling to think how sadly their father must have neglected those two girls. Happily for you, Christian has been less harmed than Hyacinth; she may be odd, but, at any rate, she is not wild."

"She had better be wild, as you call it, than crazy, as she is. Fancy her gravely consulting me yesterday whether, now she is of age, any one has the power to prevent her joining some female association or another! I believe she cherishes the conviction that she would shine as a stump orator."

"Absurd! Poor girl, though it is not her fault that she has been suffered to grow up destitute of all knowledge of the proprieties of life. However, when you are married, and take her away, she will soon have other interests."

"I am by no means sure of that."

"Well, whether or not, as the deed has to be done, it would be as well to get it over; and the tidings of your engagement would pacify your creditors at once."

Lindsay hardly seemed to hear her—his eyes were fixed on Hyacinth, who was walking slowly up and down the lower terrace, with Wilfred Lambert at her side, and followed by her dogs, who had one and all fraternized with Wilfred, though they would exchange none but the most distant greetings with Lindsay. Mrs. Ettrick's eyes followed his glance.

"Another *tête-à-tête!* Really, I should think it was almost time he should come to the point, if indeed he ever means to do so. He certainly can affect no doubt as to the answer he will receive."

Such, too, was Wilfred's own opinion. But one day had passed since the party from Ettrick had lunched at Stanham without his spending several hours in Hyacinth's company; and even Sir Loudoun's eyes had opened to the fact that the young man had some special object in these frequent visits. He had no objection—he wished his girls to marry; he had perhaps erred in allowing them to live such an extremely quiet and secluded life. It would be both pleasant and good for them to see the world, but he felt that, after so many years of eremitical seclusion, it would be more than he could undertake to show it to them himself.

Mercenary motives had never swayed him. Mr. Lambert seemed a pleasant gentlemanlike young man; his family was a very old one, having been settled in Elmshire since the days of Elizabeth; Hyacinth seemed well pleased with him, and these things far outweighed in Sir Loudoun's mind the mortgages of Stanham. So he had welcomed Wilfred, and had made him stay to dinner in unceremonious fashion, and had altogether smoothed the way for him in so far as he was able to do so.

Hyacinth was still utterly unconscious of her lover's feelings—*empressé* as was his manner, the true meaning of his soft speeches and tender words had never once dawned upon her. This could hardly have been the case, but for her preoccupation in watching Lindsay and Christian and in jealously concealing her own feelings; nothing but her preconceived view of Wilfred as a person chiefly useful in enabling her to keep out of the lovers' way, could have rendered her so persistently blind. In her merry, laughing, high-spirited manner, somewhat exaggerated now from being forced and put on to hide her real feelings, she led him on, and encouraged him as much as possible, thankful to have some one to talk to and to prevent her from brooding over her sorrow, and was utterly reckless, because completely thoughtless, of consequences.

Wilfred, as Lindsay and his mother watched them from the window, was bending down towards her, talking eagerly of the next winter's hunting, and of the certainty that Sir Loudoun

would suffer himself to be persuaded to allow her to join in the amusement. All mention of his intended winter abroad had been entirely abandoned—prudence had been cast to the winds; Hyacinth would be his, and what mattered anything else? Hyacinth felt but little certainty of obtaining the permission of which her companion made so sure, but she did not say so. The castles in the air were very pleasant; and even if they faded into mist, as they in all probability would do, she should at any rate have had the pleasure of building and enjoying them.

Gradually, as they talked, they wandered on from the terrace into the woods, and then down into the Hyacinth Dell. It was hardly so pretty now as when we first saw it, for both hyacinths and daffodils were nearly all faded; but, under any circumstances, it was always a striking spot, and so Wilfred, who had never seen it before, thought.

"Come out on the lake," he said, when he perceived the boat-house. "I should like of all things to explore that island and its ruin."

"There is not much to be seen," said Hyacinth—"only a pretty view of the house. Ruins generally look best when seen from a respectful distance—too close an acquaintance destroys the illusion."

"Still, I should like to land on the island; and you are fond of being on the water, I know."

"Very fond of it indeed, but I decline to be rowed. No one has ever rowed that boat but ourselves, so if we go you must submit to idleness."

"I'll submit to anything you please."

"Very well; then remember that, besides steering, I make you responsible for Scamp's safety. Ronald and Sailor are discreet, and can take care of themselves, but he is of an inquisitive turn of mind, and insists on balancing himself on the edge of the boat, to the imminent peril of his precious life."

"Come here, Scamp," said Wilfred, and the Skye, who already loved him next to his mistress (all dogs had an instinctive affection for him), sprang into his arms. "Lie there, sir," placing him on his knee, and caressing him with one hand, while the other held the tiller-ropes. "I answer for his safety, Miss Ettrick. Not the strongest determination shall enable him to commit suicide."

Hyacinth laughed mechanically. She was far from inclined for mirth, for her mind was occupied with the recollection of the last day she had been upon the lake, when she had rowed Lindsay in the morning before the fatal announcement of Christian's heiress-ship, which, although she knew it not, had severed them. She felt little inclined now to sing, as she had then done in sheer gayety of heart; and when Wilfred began to sing softly an Italian boat-song, she felt the tears rising in her eyes in spite of herself. Wilfred perceived her emotion, but attributed it to the tender melancholy of his song. Could there ever be a better moment for the question that was trembling on his lips? He would wait until they reached the island, but before they left it he would know his fate.

They landed, and walked slowly, and in silence, up to the ruin, and seated themselves on a large moss-covered stone, not far from the chancel arch. Hyacinth had surely been in error when she said that there was nothing to see on the island. It was a very bower of pink and white thorn; while large laburnums dropped their golden blooms into the still water, stately cedars towered here and there over the low gnarled thorn-trees, horse-chestnuts showed their lovely spikes of blossom, and great lilac-bushes filled the air with perfume. The whole island was carpeted with softest turf, the mowing of which was the sole interference attempted with the wild luxuriance of nature, and this was profusely sprinkled with the blossoms of the thorns and lilacs, looking like gems in a setting of richest green enamel.

From the stone on which they sat they looked through the ruined, ivy-mantled arch, on to the lake, softly blue, excepting where stained to purple by some passing cloud, and up the grassy terrace slopes to the Hall and the pale-violet mountains in the far distance, the gray tracery of the upper portion of the east window standing out sharp and distinct against the sapphire sky. Verily if Hyacinth could call all these beauties nothing, it could only have been that use and custom had rendered her indifferent to what all other eyes must have found so passing fair.

She sat now looking listlessly out into the distance, and caressing half mechanically Ronald's shaggy head, which was laid lovingly on her lap, forming a charming picture in her careless, unconscious grace. Wilfred sat gazing at her in

silent admiration, fearing to break the spell, even by the utterance of the words he was determined to speak, and on which his fate depended. At length, however, he could bear the silence no longer; the plunge must be made, the sooner the better.

"Miss Ettrick!"

Hyacinth gave a violent start; her mind had been far away, mapping out the golden future of Lindsay and Christian, and her own gray and sorrowful existence. The very young never realize the possibility of rallying from a disappointment; to them the black cloud in which they are enveloped seems as if it could never pass away. Nothing appears to them so heartless as the assurances of would-be comforters that in time they may, nay, probably will, look back on their troubles with equanimity. They believe implicitly in the eternity of woe, and are almost indignant with those who encourage them to hope for brighter days. Hyacinth, with her deep feelings and warm affections, was no exception to this rule, and had been picturing for herself a gloomy life, redeemed from utter wretchedness only by the knowledge that Christian was happy. Wilfred's voice recalled her to a sense of where she was.

"It is a good view of the house, is it not?" she said, hastily, with a nervous laugh; she had utterly forgotten that she was not alone.

"Beautiful; but——" Wilfred hesitated horribly, none of the words would come that had seemed so appropriate when he looked forward to this moment, "but I want—that is, I wish—I have a question to ask——"

"To ask me? What is it?" and Hyacinth turned her unconscious eyes on his face. If he had met her glance he must surely have seen that she had not the least anticipation of what was coming, not the faintest apprehension of his meaning, and he might yet have paused and postponed his question a little longer; but it was not so to be; he was intently examining a moss-covered stone, and so did not meet her eyes, but went on hurriedly,—

"I had hoped you would have understood—we have been so much together—this last week—that ride yesterday——"

"Oh! I know what you mean," exclaimed Hyacinth, who must surely have been strangely preoccupied that she did not observe the unusual excitement of his manner. "I am so

sorry! I quite forgot to ask Saunders for the prescription. We will go to the stables as we go home."

"Hang the prescription!" cried Wilfred, in a savage tone, that made Hyacinth start and stare at him in blank amazement. "Hyacinth, it is unworthy of you to trifle with me, when you must know so well the question I would ask. You have known my meaning from the very first, and have been ever kind and encouraging; you have answered me already, my sweet one, my bonny Bluebell; the question I would ask is, When may I speak to your father?"

"My father!" gasped Hyacinth, her mind slowly opening to his meaning, and comprehending at length the drift of all his conduct since their first meeting, and of the terribly false construction to which her own proceedings were liable. So horrified was she at the prospect presented to her by the sudden rending away of the bandage from her eyes, that the terms of endearment which he had addressed to her fell unheeded on her ear.

Her father!—that, when she was striving so hard to conceal her sorrow that the man she loved did not care for her, it should be possible for another man to suggest asking her father's permission to marry her! How stupid she must have been! How ill she must have behaved! How bitterly sorry she was! Her mind was in such a whirl, her thoughts in such inextricable confusion, that after that one exclamation she sat staring out over the lake, utterly unable either to collect them or to recover herself.

But Wilfred, naturally having no conception of the real state of the case, was kneeling at her side in less time than it has taken to describe her thoughts.

"Yes, your father, sweet one," he cried, as he threw his arm round her and pressed her closely. "I presume he has some claim to be asked for his daughter's hand. But he loves you, Hyacinth, and has encouraged me, seeing that you care for me."

"Oh! what have I done? What shall I do?" cried poor Hyacinth, as, withdrawing herself with difficulty from her lover's embrace, she buried her face in her hands and burst into a flood of tears.

"What have you done, sweet one?" said Wilfred, endeavoring to draw her hands from her face; "made me the happi-

est of men, by letting me see that you love me. What shall you do? Dry your tears and smile upon me, or let me kiss them away."

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Hyacinth, vehemently, rescuing herself resolutely from another embrace. "Oh! Mr. Lambert, I am so sorry, so ashamed! What will you think of me?—but it is all a sad and terrible mistake! Oh! what shall I do?" and she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Sorry! A mistake! What do you mean?" said Wilfred, turning deadly pale. "Hyacinth, say what you really mean; what mistake can there be? Have I not loved you ever since the day that you first flashed on my view at Langham Gorse? Since the first night I was introduced to you, have I ever been an unnecessary minute absent from your side? You could have had no doubt of my meaning, and surely yours has been equally plain. You have distinguished me from others as much as you possibly could; you have given me a thousand tokens of preference; for the whole of this past week we have been almost alone together. I say again it is unworthy of you to trifle with me, or to profess surprise at the declaration you must have expected."

He spoke with a confidence he was really far from feeling, for Hyacinth's manner struck a deadly chill to his heart. The silence for some moments was unbroken save by her sobs; then he spoke again.

"Hyacinth, in pity answer me!"

With a gasping sob she looked up and saw him standing before her, his hands clinched, his brows bent, his face set, white and stern.

"In mercy speak!—let me know what you mean; do not torture me with riddles."

With a great effort she choked back her sobs.

"You will never forgive me—I shall never forgive myself,—but I implore you to believe me when I say that never once did the thought of your caring for me enter my mind. I see now how blind I have been. I acknowledge what you say—that I have seemed to encourage you,—but indeed, indeed, I meant no harm—I never once dreamed of this."

"Am I really to believe this?" asked Wilfred, in a voice that sounded choked and hard. "Hyacinth, it cannot be! You must have been blind—ay, blind and deaf—not to have

been aware of my devotion. It is impossible but that you are jesting."

"Jesting! Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Hyacinth. "I speak the simple truth; upbraid me as you will. I deserve all that you can say, and more; only believe that the truth never dawned upon me till now. Blind and deaf I may—nay, must have been,—but I have not willfully deceived you. I have not intentionally captivated and led you on, though appearances are, I feel, sorely against me; but nothing I can say will ever express my sorrow."

"And is it quite impossible?—can you give me no hope?" said Wilfred, in the same strangely dry and husky voice.

Hyacinth's answer, though given almost in a whisper, was distinctly audible.

"Impossible; I can give none."

"Hyacinth," said Wilfred, after a long pause, kneeling down before her, so as to bring his eyes on a level with hers—"Hyacinth, I see it all. You love your cousin. Nay," as she started up with an indignant exclamation, "I have a right to speak; hear me out. You love him; you have been watching him all this time making love to your sister. You have been too unhappy to think of anything else, and so you have never seen my great and exceeding love for you, growing daily before your eyes. Hyacinth, your cousin has no thought for you; his engagement to your sister cannot be long delayed. Why should there not be hope for me? I will not ask you to marry me now; I will wait as long as ever you choose, if you will but give me a hope at last."

All Hyacinth's indignation at Wilfred's reference to his discovery of her sad secret had passed away; for a few moments she pondered the idea. Lindsay was evidently lost to her forever. Might she not make some amends for the wrong she had done, by endeavoring to render the man who loved her, and whom she had so grievously misled, happy? There was a certain fascination in the idea, but——Hyacinth paused. Like all pure-minded girls, she had a very high ideal of the amount of love necessary before marriage could be in any degree considered lawful; she felt that all she possessed was centred on Lindsay, and, with her romantic but firm belief in the eternity of both love and sorrow, she felt that it ever would be, though she knew that when he was Christian's

husband such love must, if possible—ah! if possible!—be rooted out. So the thought of sacrificing herself as an atonement faded away. She shook her head, and said,—

"I cannot—indeed I cannot."

"Think again," urged Wilfred, seizing her hands. "Oh! Hyacinth, Hyacinth, if you did but know how blank and miserable and purposeless my life seems without you, you would have pity upon me. Say I may come to you again in a year's time. This is the sixteenth of May. Let me come to you again this day next year; you may feel differently then. Tell me I may come to you then, and I will go away from Stanham to-night, and never see you, or torment you by word or sign, till that day. Your cousin will have married Christian then, and, long ere I return, you will have forgotten the lover in the brother-in-law. Give me this hope, Hyacinth;" and he pressed her hands with an earnestness that was positive pain. "I will swear to keep my part of the bond, and not to see you again till this day year. Say it may be so;" and he bent eagerly forward till his face almost touched hers.

Hyacinth hesitated. That she should ever love again appeared to her perfectly impossible—it seemed disingenuous not to say so; on the other hand, a year was a very long time. Men were, as she had always read, proverbially fickle—

> "Deceivers ever—
> One foot in sea, and one on shore;
> To one thing constant never."

If he did not see her for a whole twelvemonth, he would in all probability forget her. She was getting quite exhausted with the varied emotions of the morning—it would be an unspeakable relief if Mr. Lambert did go abroad, for it would be very painful to her constantly to see one to whom she had undoubtedly behaved so very ill. Altogether, this plan of a year's absence seemed to present many advantages. He who hesitates is lost: Hyacinth proved no exception to the rule. Gradually and slowly Wilfred Lambert bent her to his will. On that day twelvemonth he would return to receive his answer, which, as he averred, would, he had little doubt, be a favorable one. He even forced the reluctant Hyacinth to suffer him to ratify the agreement with a kiss and with an

exchange of tokens, he taking her turquoise ring, shaped like a heart, and giving her the locket from his watch-chain.

Hyacinth rose to her feet, and heaved a weary sigh—the relief of this scheme was certainly prospective; at present she felt as if a heavy chain had been placed around her neck.

"Our last meeting for a whole year," said Wilfred. "Let me take one last good look at you, my bonnie Bluebell, for I must not stay long when we reach the Hall. I shall want all the time for my preparations at home. One short year, and then happiness with my darling forever! Oh! I know you have not promised," as she looked deprecatingly at him; "but I feel sanguine, Hyacinth—I might almost say certain."

Hyacinth made no reply—so many strong emotions had reduced her to a state of complete exhaustion. She dipped her handkerchief into a little spring that bubbled up close to where they sat, and bathed her swollen eyes; and when their appearance was a little improved, she suggested that it was time to go home, and that they had better regain the boat.

"You must row this time," she said, with a faint smile. "I fear I am hardly up to it."

But lo! when they reached the small creek no boat was there! Wilfred had been in such a perturbed state when they landed, so bent upon putting his fortune to the touch, that he had failed to fasten the rope securely, and the boat, their only means of reaching the main land, had drifted away, whither they could not even see. What was to be done? It certainly was a most awkward predicament! The only course seemed to be to endeavor to make signals of distress that, being seen at the house, might attract attention and procure release; though, as no one knew that they were on the island, it seemed rather a forlorn hope. Still, it was the only thing to try. They were, however, spared long signaling, for they were suddenly hailed by Lindsay, who, with Christian, appeared in the boat close to them.

CHAPTER XI.

"She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd,
She is a woman, therefore may be won."
Titus Andronicus.

"Have you not heard it said full oft,
A woman's nay doth stand for nought?"
The Passionate Pilgrim.

WILFRED'S negligence in failing properly to secure the boat had had a more important effect than that of merely imprisoning himself and Hyacinth for a short time upon the island. When Lindsay left his mother, after the conversation narrated at the commencement of the last chapter, he went first to his own room, and read over once again the letters from importunate creditors received in the last few days; and then, rendered desperate by their perusal, went in search of Christian, determined that, as the deed must be done, he would propose to her at once, and get the matter settled. Money he must have. As it seemed impossible to obtain it without encumbrance, he must even reconcile himself to taking it with his strong-minded cousin as a makeweight, and must endeavor to restrain her eccentricities within such bounds as might be possible.

It was strange that it never occurred either to Lindsay or his mother that there could be a doubt as to Christian's answer. Not being in love, Lindsay was oppressed with no lover's diffidence, and regarded it as but right and natural that Christian should joyfully and thankfully accept him; while Mrs. Ettrick, not having the remotest notion of her niece's disposition, assumed that she would be too overjoyed to escape from dullness into the world to refuse any one. To be sure, she had refused Captain Gordon; but then he had blundered, and had been so extremely pushing and precipitate. Lindsay, with the title in prospect, was a very different suitor,—indeed, Mrs. Ettrick hardly took the trouble to argue the pros and cons of the matter in her own mind, so certain did she feel that all would come to pass as she wished, whenever Lindsay

chose to ask the question. She felt she should be glad when the affair was settled; she wanted to arrange her own plans, and it must be quite clear to Sir Loudoun that both his daughters were about to leave him before he asked her to undertake the management of his establishment, as she had quite made up her mind he should do. There would happily be no difficulty about Hyacinth; she had most obligingly rendered it quite certain that her marriage could not be long delayed; unless indeed, mused Mrs. Ettrick, Mr. Lambert were disgusted by her open pursuit of him.

Poor Hyacinth!—if her aunt's eyes could but have penetrated the screen of drooping laburnum, blooming hawthorn, and fragrant lilac that surrounded her at that moment, and could have seen her tears of bitter sorrow at having so terribly misled her lover, she would indeed have been amazed.

Meanwhile Lindsay, having, as we have said, reperused the documents that made his appropriation of Christian such an absolute necessity, descended to the drawing-room in search of her. Christian was dreaming by the window; the *Times*, in which she had just been reading the account of a Female Suffrage meeting, lay at her feet; a pamphlet on her favorite subject was in her hand. She was completely absorbed in her own thoughts and fancies, which were strongly impelling her to write to the secretary of the society in which she was so deeply interested, and ask to be shown how she could do something more for the cause than merely sympathize with and wish it success. It seemed rather a bold and determined step to take on her own responsibility, yet what was the use of being of age if she could not do things which would have been impossible before? She rather enjoyed the idea of her importance, even while she experienced a half-acknowledged terror at the thought of her own hardihood. She looked up as Lindsay entered, and at once addressed him.

"Oh, Cousin Lindsay! I have just been reading the interesting report of this great meeting at Liverpool. How I should like to have been there!"

"I'm sure, Christian, it is a very good thing you were not. Why in the world should you want to hear a lot of silly women make themselves hoarse, talking of things they don't understand?"

"I really don't see why you should say that," said Chris-

tian; "women understand things just as well as men; besides, the speakers were not exclusively ladies."

"You don't mean to say they let a man get in a word?"

"Yes, and a Mr. Joyce seems to have made a very good speech—not so forcible a one as if he had been a woman, of course, for he can only *see* the grievances and hardships which we *feel*, but still wonderfully reasonable and sensible."

"For a man—I understand."

"I am thinking of writing to the secretary of the society, and asking how I can be of some practical use; it seems so cold and stupid to go on only sympathizing, and yet doing nothing."

"Good heavens! Christian, pray think what you are about; you'll fall into the hands of a set of low, vulgar wretches, and won't be able ever to free yourself."

"What nonsense, Lindsay!—really enlightened people can never be vulgar."

"Indeed they can though, and it rather depends on what you happen to call 'enlightened'; besides, all that public sort of life, speechifying, and going to meetings, and all that kind of thing, is so terribly unfeminine, so unbecoming in a lady, more especially in a young one."

"But the movement absolutely depends on women, and must be carried through by them. It is not likely that men would give us what we want else; they are too jealous of the power of which they have had the monopoly so long."

Lindsay could not repress a smile.

"Ah! you may laugh," continued his cousin; "but you know well enough that, much as you may affect to despise us, the real reason why you withhold our rights is that you feel that, if we were placed on an equality with you, we should at once prove our superiority."

Lindsay laughed.

"Well, we shall never agree if we talk till doomsday—we may as well leave it alone."

"I should like to know what you think women may do? What is not 'unfeminine'?"

"You won't agree if I tell you they were only created as helpmates for men. As I said before, we shall never agree, for we see the matter in diametrically opposite lights; but we can, at least, agree to differ. Married life appears to me the

proper sphere for a woman. Christian—I—I want to speak to you."

Christian felt surprised; surely they were talking now, had been doing so for the last half-hour, ever since they had strolled out on the terrace from the drawing-room window. What need, then, could there be for the solemn announcement that he wanted to speak to her? She thought it very strange, but no suspicion of his meaning crossed her mind, and she merely looked inquiringly at him.

But Lindsay, though ordinarily pretty fluent, found that he had literally no words at his command; the task was so distasteful that it seemed hard to frame the speech in which he must complete it. He paused, he stammered, and as she looked and listened in supreme amazement, the truth suddenly burst upon Christian's mind. Her first thought was that he had not committed himself, had not yet said anything she was bound to understand, and that it was a thing fervently to be desired that he should be prevented from so doing; she would take good care that he should never have another chance. This was a very different matter from refusing Captain Gordon—he was to leave the next day, and she might very probably never see him again; but Lindsay was a guest at Ettrick for a period apparently indefinite; nothing could be more unpleasant than having to meet him every day after having refused him, excepting, indeed, his abrupt departure, which would announce that she had done so. It suddenly struck her that Sir Loudoun had thrown her and her cousin together most prominently during the festivities of the coming of age; perhaps Lindsay had guessed that her father would not be averse to their marriage. All the more reason that she should, if possible, avoid a proposal; and it was just when at her wits' end for some means of interrupting Lindsay, and of averting the catastrophe she so much dreaded, that the truant boat suddenly caught her eye. Never was distant sail more welcome to shipwrecked mariner on a barren rock.

"Look! look!" she exclaimed, touching Lindsay's arm, and ruthlessly interrupting him just when, having got as far as "I don't think, Christian, it can surprise you to hear," he felt that he might possibly, at length, achieve hs speech,—"see, the boat is adrift! What can have happened? Only Hyacinth and I have keys of the boat-house; it is very odd!

Where can she be? Would you mind just going to the Hyacinth Dell?—or stay, I will go. If you will run up to the house for the boat-hook which hangs in the inner hall, you will be able to get hold of the boat as it passes the point; the current will sweep it quite close in, and bring it round to the mouth of the Dell," and almost before she had given her directions Christian had set off, running at the top of her speed, full of the most devout thankfulness for her escape.

Had she been very stupid, she wondered, as she sat in the boat-house awaiting Lindsay; having descried Hyacinth's dress through the trees on the island, and at once comprehended what had happened. She supposed she must have been; she had been so occupied with her own fancies and theories, and with watching Hyacinth preparing, as she supposed, to make herself happy in the way which, to her, seemed so utterly incomprehensible. Doubtless she and Mr. Lambert had come to a mutual understanding, and were far too happy on their island to discover the loss of their means of return.

How unspeakably grateful she felt to the carelessness that had suffered the boat to get adrift! How else could she ever have diverted Lindsay from his theme? Well, thank goodness, forewarned was forearmed. She would take good care to give him no future opportunity. She supposed she must go with him in the boat. Yes, it would be pleasanter for Hyacinth, he and Mr. Lambert did not seem to get on well together; indeed, Lindsay, she thought, was often barely civil. However, the distance was too short to be dangerous; besides, surely Lindsay must have perceived that she was thankful to escape, and although he had mercifully been prevented from going far enough to render it necessary for her to show that she had understood him, he must have discretion sufficient to understand her sentiments. If so, she need fear no further annoyance; and Christian gave a sigh of relief, and again thought with infinite thankfulness of the drifting boat.

Not altogether so Lindsay. It was indeed something of a relief to find himself still unfettered, to think that the words which would bind him to a girl whom he absolutely disliked remained yet unspoken. Still, it was but a brief reprieve. His difficulties were becoming daily more pressing, the plunge must be made, but for the moment he enjoyed his escape, and breathed more freely. He was far from imagining that Chris-

tian had so fully understood him; it was certain that she cared for no one else, and he was little disposed to imagine it possible he could woo in vain a heart not preoccupied. He ascribed her interruption and sudden flight to maiden coyness, which would give him all the trouble of again approaching her, but of her ultimate answer never a doubt crossed his mind.

As he ran up to the Hall for the boat-hook his satisfaction at the reprieve lessened; his mother was sure again to taunt him with the folly of delay, and all his work had to come over again; he began to wish it were over and done with. What an idiot that fellow Lambert must be to let the boat get adrift! What Hyacinth could see to like in him he could not understand—a conceited, red-headed country bumpkin, who thought no end of himself because he had kept a pack of hounds! Well, there was no understanding a woman's taste, that was quite clear. With which sage reflection he seized the boat-hook, and ran down the terraces.

He reached the point not a moment too soon. The current there was somewhat rapid, and he was but just in time to seize the boat as it was swept past. Drawing it towards him, he jumped in, and, when he had seated himself to row to the mouth of the dell, he perceived at his foot a dark-blue bow, which had fallen from Hyacinth's white dress. He picked it up and pressed it to his lips, putting it carefully afterwards into his pocket.

Among all the many love episodes through which he had passed, Lindsay Ettrick's love for Hyacinth was the first genuine passion of his life. His other loves had been born of the *ennui* of country quarters, when a flirtation, no matter with whom, was a relief to the tedium of the monotonous days, or of a determination to shine by attracting to himself the preference of the belle of the night, or of a short-lived admiration for some great beauty, or of anything, in short, connected with the fancy, and not with the heart. Now, for the first time, he felt what real love was, and learned at its touch to be distrustful of his own powers of pleasing, and blind to the effect which they had really produced. What did it matter whether he married Christian or not? The woman he adored loved another. If she had been free, he told himself, as, with languid, yet powerful strokes, he swept

round the promontory to the Hyacinth Dell, he would have turned a deaf ear to his mother's remonstrances, and have tried his fate. As it was—well, if he could not have love he might as well have money, and he must endeavor to curb his wife's absurdities sufficiently to conceal them from the world.

Christian took good care that their journey to the island, short as it was, should have no perilous pauses, wherein it might be possible for her cousin, if so minded, to renew his suit. She chattered in an unwonted and almost breathless fashion, that caused Lindsay to glance at her in surprise, but she gave him no time to answer. When the boat touched the island, and Hyacinth and Wilfred appeared, it seemed as great a deliverance to her as the striking off of his chains to a captive. She gave a deep sigh, and became suddenly quiet.

Very grave and silent were the pair who stepped into the boat; there was none of the merry laughter at their forlorn condition on the island which might naturally have been expected.

"How lucky you saw the boat!" was all Hyacinth said as she leant over the side, dipping her fingers abstractedly into the water; and when Christian had answered "Yes," there was silence, Wilfred busying himself with the care of Scamp, who evinced a preternatural desire to commit suicide, fascinated probably by his own reflection in the still water.

Silence lasted till they had landed, and then Wilfred, turning to Christian, said,—

"I must wish you good-by now, Miss Ettrick; I leave home to-night, and have a good deal to do before I start."

"Indeed! I hope you will be back in time for the picnic we were planning yesterday to Merston Chase."

"Hardly, I think; I shall be away for a considerable time. I am going to America."

"To America! Surely it is a very sudden determination?"

"My movements are apt to be sudden. Forgive my hurrying on. Good-by! Good-by, Ettrick. Good-by, Miss Hyacinth," giving her hand a pressure that seemed as if it must crush every bone; and then with a caress to each of the dogs—*her* dogs—he was gone.

"It quite takes away one's breath," said Christian, turning to Lindsay in her bewilderment; but he was occupying himself with the boat, and did not answer. Hope was busy at

his heart. Was it, could it be possible that his cousin had refused Mr. Lambert, after the extreme encouragement which she had undoubtedly given him? It looked like it, his going off in this strange hurry to America; and yet—if she had, was there a gleam of hope for him? She must be a terrible flirt, but if she would but accept him he would take his chance of that. He would love her so that she could never care for another. But was this exactly what had happened? She looked worn, wretched, unhappy, quite unlike a girl who, having deliberately flirted with and encouraged a man, had just had the supreme triumph of refusing him. No, it could not be that; there must be some other solution of the mystery. He was far too disturbed to meet his cousins at present, and when he had made fast the boat and locked the boat-house door, he plunged into the woods for a long solitary walk, coming in barely in time to dress for dinner, and thus escaping his mother's interrogatories.

The two sisters walked up the Glen in silence. Hyacinth was longing to reach her own room, to be quiet and alone—to think over all that had happened, and to understand clearly what she had really done. Already she was beginning bitterly to repent the half promise which she had given; it seemed to weigh upon and stifle her. Far off as was the date fixed for Wilfred's return for his answer, it seemed as if the expectation of it would haunt her as an ever-present spectre; and she again and again deplored the blindness that had made her see in him nothing but a means of dissembling her love for Lindsay, and had caused her to encourage him in what she now saw, too late, had been a most reprehensible manner. Christian on her side was completely bewildered. She felt sure that Wilfred had spoken to Hyacinth; she imagined herself certain that her sister loved him; what then could have happened that he should take a hasty farewell and fly off to America, and that Hyacinth should walk silently and gravely by her side, like one in a dream? The riddle was completely beyond her; but she was discreet, and asked no questions—she felt that love was a matter which she did not understand, and had therefore the rare wisdom not to meddle with it.

"Luncheon must be ready," she said, looking at her watch as they reached the hall-door.

"Oh, I don't want anything, I'm rather tired; it's very

hot," answered Hyacinth incoherently, and disappeared upstairs; and Christian following, on her way to her own room, heard her lock her door.

Mrs. Ettrick was considerably puzzled at the state of affairs. Lindsay and Hyacinth were both absent, Mr. Lambert had disappeared without the usual courtesy of wishing her good-by, and Christian, usually so placid, was manifestly perturbed. Something had evidently happened, but she could obtain no clue to what it might be, for Christian, being determined not to meddle in her sister's affairs, made no mention of Wilfred's announcement of his sudden departure for America. She was sorely perplexed by it herself, but had no idea of forcing herself on Hyacinth's confidence; her sister would confide in her if she chose—if not, she did not care. Mr. Lambert's proceedings were no concern of hers. Mrs. Ettrick was well versed in the art of concealing her feelings, but she had seldom had a harder task than that of dissembling her curiosity and impatience during that afternoon. She questioned Christian adroitly, and as closely as she dared, but found her niece quite impenetrable. She had walked on the terrace with Lindsay—they had been for a short time on the lake—they had met Mr. Lambert and Hyacinth—he had said he must go home at once, as he had a great deal to do. Why had not Hyacinth appeared at luncheon? She had said she was tired, and had complained of the heat; it really was quite wonderful for May. This was all Mrs. Ettrick could obtain, and she watched eagerly for Lindsay's appearance, but he returned so late as to evade her inquiries.

Hyacinth made her appearance at dinner, avowing herself quite recovered from her fatigue; she supposed it must have been rowing in the sun that had upset her; certainly never had she been in higher or wilder spirits. In the long afternoon that she had spent alone lying on her sofa, she had determined that to appear in high spirits was her wisest course. She would not for worlds that any one should suspect her love for Lindsay—it would be humiliating to her and painful to her sister, who must, she thought, soon be his wife; but she was almost equally unwilling that it should be guessed that she had refused Wilfred. Now that her eyes were opened to the way she had encouraged him, she felt sure that all the family party must be firmly persuaded that she was in love with him;

if so, they would never suspect her refusal, but would imagine that there must be some understanding between them, or else she would not seem so well satisfied when he had just announced his departure. She shrank from the reproaches which she felt she deserved for her conduct towards him, and devoutly hoped that, if she kept her own counsel, it might never be known. Lindsay and Christian must, of course, be too completely occupied with each other to think much of her. Aunt Marion's visit must presumably come to an end some time or another, and when she and her father were left alone he would return to his usual habits, and forget that Mr. Lambert existed. She resolved to put away from her the thought of the question to be asked her that day year. Twelve whole months! He would never remember her so long. He would be married before then, she sincerely hoped. It had been a means of breaking the disappointment that her bad behavior, for which she could never be sufficiently sorry, had caused him to fancy that all would come right in a year; but he would soon forget all about it, and she well knew it could never be. No, her love for Lindsay, unfortunate as it was, was, she felt, the love of her life; she could never, never care for another. Christian alone felt an uncomfortable suspicion that her sister's wild spirits were not quite natural or heartfelt, it seemed to her that there was a strange, unnatural ring in her laugh that she had never heard before; but she said nothing, only sat even more quiet and silent than was her wont.

Hyacinth at once adverted to Wilfred's departure for America, wondered Christian should not have mentioned such a startling event, laughed at the extraordinary precipitancy with which he had made up his mind, avowed her belief that it was admiration for the cedars on the island that had inspired him with a sudden fancy to go and explore the "cedar shades" of the West; and rattled on all through the evening, talking and laughing in a manner that reduced her listeners to a state of complete bewilderment.

Sir Loudoun wondered greatly, but supposed that he had been mistaken, and that his daughter and Mr. Lambert had only been amusing themselves. Mrs. Ettrick was equally perplexed, but approached more nearly to the truth, believing that her niece had refused Mr. Lambert, and stigmatizing her in her own mind as an incorrigible flirt, but never suspecting

her affection for Lindsay, though foreseeing that, in his infatuated state respecting her, her freedom, if it were declared, might produce most undesirable complications.

Christian was too puzzled to know what to think; and Lindsay—Lindsay was in a fever of excitement—what had happened he could not quite comprehend, but it seemed tolerably certain that Wilfred Lambert had at any rate not been accepted. If Hyacinth were free, could he sell himself to Christian?

CHAPTER XII.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more."
To Lucasta on going to the Wars.

About three months previous to the events recorded in the last chapter, a young artist was painting busily in his studio in Rome. The picture was almost finished, wanting nothing, indeed, but the few last touches. It was a scene of spring in the sweet South, most exquisitely and delicately painted.

"I have breathed on the South, and the chestnut flowers
By thousands have burst from the forest bowers;
And the ancient graves and the fallen fanes
Are veiled with wreaths on Italian plains."

A bubbling stream gushed forth from a gray rock under the shadow of a wide-spreading chestnut-tree; everywhere in the grass around were the delicate-hued anemones, the sweet narcissus, and the stately white lilies; everywhere was color, and light, and warmth.

A slender girl, in the picturesque costume of her country, and endowed with her full share of rich Southern beauty, stood leaning against the trunk of the tree, with a basket of violets and narcissus on her arm, and one little bare foot dabbling listlessly in the purling brook. Her attitude was full of grace—she was evidently waiting for some one, and expectation was legibly written on every feature of her face, in every line of her figure.

At a short distance lay two children, but little removed from babyhood. They had evidently been helping the elder girl to fill her basket, and, fatigued with their exertions, had fallen asleep, half in sun and half in shadow, with the bright anemones tightly grasped in their tiny hands, and the tall white lilies, emblems of innocence, overshadowing them. The figures were life-size, and the effects of color and of light and shade were managed in a masterly manner.

The artist looked lovingly at his work when the last touch had at length been given, and then, drawing a deep old-fashioned arm-chair in front of the easel, sank into it, and again scrutinized the painting carefully. From the deep tender blue of the sky to the delicate hues of the wild anemones, from the light fleecy cloud, half seen through the chestnut-leaves, to the white linen folds of the peasant head-dress, from the warm flush of the ripe Southern cheek to the cold fragile beauty of the fair white lilies, from the anxious, expectant look of the girl to the happy, unconscious slumber of the two children—all was finished to the utmost, and all satisfied him—in so far, at least, as a true artist can ever be satisfied with his own work. For it is one of the sorest trials of the really gifted that the power of execution lags lamentably behind that of conception, that the cunning of the hand to execute is so infinitely less than that of the brain to imagine or of the eye to criticise. Still, allowing for this inevitable source of dissatisfaction, Laurence Courtray was well contented, as he sat for more than an hour examining and criticising in every detail the work which was, as he fondly hoped, to make his reputation when hung on the walls of Burlington House.

His must have been undoubted talent, for he had not been brought up to the profession of an artist. His father, a man of moderate fortune, had given him a good education, but no profession, and, just as Laurence attained the age of twenty, died of grief at the collapse of a commercial speculation in which the whole of his capital had been invested. He had been a loving husband and tender father, and both Laurence and his mother mourned him bitterly.

An annuity of two hundred a year, which had fortunately been settled on Mrs. Courtray, was all the provision left to them; but at this juncture, an old, childless friend of Mr. Courtray's came forward, and offered to befriend Laurence in

any way in his power, and Laurence at once decided on embracing the profession of an artist.

Mr. Jameson, a worthy merchant, in his heart considered this a most foolish project; he had hoped that the young man would have taken what he considered a more sensible view of life, and have devoted his attention to commerce; in which case he would, after a very short probation, have admitted him as a junior partner in his own firm; but this advantageous offer Laurence gratefully but firmly declined. He felt, he said, that his genius did not lie in that direction—that if it were the only course open to him, he would use every endeavor to do his best, but that, as Mr. Jameson had so generously offered to help him in any way he mights elect, he felt certain that the artist's career was the only one which he could pursue with any hope of success. From his infancy he had had a pencil in his hand at all leisure moments; very flattering things had been said of his talents by the artists who had frequented his father's house, and he felt that there, and there only, lay his vocation. So, with a muttered dissent and a doubtful shake of the head, Mr. Jameson gave way, and Laurence began to study in earnest. Unlike geniuses in general, he did not lack application; his patience and perseverance were the delight of every master who instructed him.

Ere he had concluded his second year's study, his mother faded gently away from his side; she had never recovered from the shock of her husband's death, following so closely, as it had done, upon the catastrophe of their shattered fortunes and ruined home. After her death Laurence devoted himself even more ardently to study than he had hitherto done; his mother's small annuity had died with her, and besides, he had no longer the distraction of her company in the evenings, when he had loved to read to her, and to talk of what they had read, or of the pictures which ever seemed to his fertile fancy to grow out of every subject—no longer the pleasure of taking her short excursions into the country, whenever he could spare the time and she felt equal to the exertion. If ever son was devoted to a mother, Laurence had been so to his, and his sense of desolation at her loss was very bitter.

Mr. Jameson, pitying his solitary condition, insisted on his taking up his abode in his house. This Laurence greatly disliked, infinitely preferring to be his own master; but feeling

under what an obligation he was to his kind friend, and seeing how hurt he appeared at the refusal of his kindness, he forced himself to accept the invitation when Mr. Jameson urged it a second time.

And once established in the large mansion in South Kensington, he hardly regretted his compliance. His painting-room was perfect both in light and ventilation; his privacy was strictly respected; no demand was ever made upon his time, save that of being punctual for dinner, and he enjoyed once more all the comforts and luxuries of his earlier years. Scarcely a good preparation, perhaps, for one who had to work for his bread, but this was a consideration little likely to occur to a youth of two-and-twenty, and he enjoyed to the full the softness and the elegancies of his life, without, however, abating in the slightest degree the ardor of his study.

Mr. Jameson was unmarried; Laurence's mother was the only woman who had ever touched his heart, and she had preferred his friend Edward Courtray; but his two nephews and their sister, his only relatives, lived with him. The eldest nephew, Alexander, was being brought up to follow in his uncle's steps and become the head of the firm, and was already intrusted with a very considerable share of management and responsibility, though he was little more than six-and-twenty. He was not brilliant, but persevering and clear-headed, and blessed with one of the best tempers ever given to man. It was even, without being lymphatic; sweet, without being weak. Horace, the second brother, was about two years younger; a wild youth, who never would settle to anything, and whose debts, follies, and generally unsatisfactory conduct gave his uncle many an anxious hour. The girl, Lilias, in some respects more nearly resembled her younger than her elder brother. Her uncle sometimes said sorrowfully that he feared there must have been some grave error in her training, for he believed that never did a thought of any one save herself enter her mind. And such was indeed the case. Slight and very delicate, with a constant hectic cough, she reveled in the ease, softness, and luxury of her life, but never once thought of extending any of the benefits which she so keenly enjoyed to others. That any one else should suffer moved her not in the least, so long as no shadow of either trouble or discomfort fell upon herself. And yet to those who knew her but slightly

she had the art to appear a fair, fragile, gentle creature, ever thinking of the pleasure of others, and regardless of her own.

Youth is not habitually discriminating as to character, and Laurence's artistic eye being struck with the elegance and fragility of Lilias's appearance, he very speedily fell into the agonies of first love; and, as is the wont of the victims of that blindest of passions, endowed her with every virtue and excellence under the sun. Her face, in its setting of pale, reddish-golden hair, appeared in his portfolio in every possible combination. What a curious journal of the life of a young artist might be compiled from the various faces, each of which appears exclusively for a time in every picture, and then suddenly vanishes, to be, in all probability, replaced by one of a directly opposite type!

Of a *young* artist's life we say advisedly; his older brethren are more apt to think of the visible and attainable model than of the ethereal and idealized divinity. Certainly, at that time, Laurence's journal would have been found very full of Lilias, and she liked the admiration of the handsome young painter, but was too engrossed with herself to care for him.

Mr. Jameson was extremely fond of dilating on the manner in which he had made all his fortune himself, having risen from a mere clerk, and also on the disposition which he had made of it in his will. The business, which was large and extremely lucrative, with capabilities of still further extension, was to be left to Alexander, as was also a small landed property; the savings of many years, which were very considerable, were to be divided equally between Horace and Lilias, with the exception of ten thousand pounds, which was to be left to Laurence. The exact amount to be inherited by his nephew and niece Mr. Jameson never mentioned, but left it to be surmised that the sum was large.

About a year after Laurence had first taken up his abode under Mr. Jameson's roof, Horace's debts became once more a source of grave commotion; his uncle declared that he would no longer support him in idleness in London, and insisted upon his at once choosing a career. With infinite grumbling, Horace at length reluctantly consented to go out to New Zealand for a few years, as superintendent of some property which Mr. Jameson possessed there. His uncle suggested his going out as a means of breaking him of his extravagant habits

and of separating him from undesirable companions, rather than with any idea of his services proving of the smallest value. The only part of the business to which Horace looked forward with any sort of satisfaction was the long sea voyage, and he went on board the *Queen of the Southern Seas* in fairly good spirits and humor. Six months later news was received of the total loss of the ship, and, it was assumed, of all on board. A vessel had met with portions of the wreck two days after a violent storm, and it was said that, even if a boat had been launched, none could have lived in such a sea. So Horace was mourned as dead, and Mr. Jameson reproached himself bitterly for ever having dispatched him on the voyage. Although not a shadow of blame could naturally attach to him, he felt as if responsible for his nephew's melancholy fate, and was never again his old cheerful self after the receipt of the melancholy intelligence. Laurence became very dear to him, and after a time he announced his intention of altering his will, and leaving to him the share of the fortune that would have belonged to Horace.

Feeling himself no longer prospectively poor, Laurence ventured to approach Lilias, towards whom his feelings had undergone no change, but whom he had felt that he, an almost pauper artist, had no right to appropriate. Now all was changed; as joint heir with her to her uncle's wealth, he was far from an unsuitable match for her. So Lilias thought also. Now that Laurence was undeniably a "good match," she discovered that she had long been attached to him, and they were engaged, to Mr. Jameson's no small satisfaction. He was not destined, however, to behold their union; for, shortly before the time fixed for the marriage, he caught a violent cold, from which he never rallied, but died two days before the one fixed for the wedding.

His will exactly fulfilled what he had always announced as its purport—Alexander inheriting the business and estate, Lilias and Laurence each becoming entitled to one hundred thousand pounds. After a sufficient interval, the preparations for the wedding were again commenced, and Lilias and her lover were sitting together in the twilight less than a week before the appointed day, when a ring at the bell was followed by a great commotion in the hall, and suddenly the door was flung open, and Horace stood before them. Lilias screamed

and fainted, Laurence stood fairly stupefied; but in a very short time Horace explained everything. He had landed at the Cape, and, having a pleasant engagement on shore, had neglected to rejoin the *Queen of the Southern Seas*, which had consequently sailed without him. He had waited for another ship, or rather, as he expressed it, for "what might turn up," and in a short time had, well pleased, found himself on board Lord Sealand's yacht, the *Laïs*. Their course had been most erratic: they had started to go to Rio, but had changed their minds and gone to Calcutta, and thence had proceeded up the country to shoot tigers; then they had been to China and Japan and the South Sea Islands, spending nearly two years in their travels, and had finally left the *Laïs* at San Francisco to make her way home to England, and had come across America by the Pacific Railway. And why had he not written? Oh! well, they knew he was always a bad hand at that sort of thing; besides, they ought to know that no news was always good news. Really, though, he had always meant to write, but somehow he had never had time! In his own way he was sorry to hear of his uncle's death, though, like his sister, his feelings were only deep respecting anything that affected himself. But his amazement and dismay were unspeakable when Lilias suddenly exclaimed,—

"Well, Horace, poor Uncle George always said you would live to regret your idleness about writing, and I fancy you will repent it now. Thinking, as of course we all did, that you were drowned, he altered his will, and left your share of the fortune to Laurence. We are to be married on Thursday."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Horace, in a tone of intensest dismay; and there was a dead pause, broken by Laurence, who said, quietly,—

"My dear Lilias, how can you speak as if I were going to keep Horace's fortune? Of course I shall hand it over to him at once, only reserving the ten thousand pounds, which, as you know, your uncle always said he had left me in his original will."

"But the money is yours," said Lilias, hotly; "we are going to be married next week,—it is all in the settlements."

"The settlements must be altered; it cannot be helped, even if it delay our marriage a few days longer. As to the

money being mine, it is nothing of the kind; the will was made under a misconception."

"Nonsense! You know you have a perfect right to keep the money."

"In strict law, possibly; in equity, no more than I have to the Queen's crown. Really, Lilias, I wonder how you can talk so! Any one would think you wanted to rob Horace of his undoubted right!"

"I don't know what any one might think," said Lilias, slowly, and with a bright color rising to her cheeks, "but I do know this, that if people choose to go wandering about enjoying themselves when they are supposed to be drowned, and when their relations have all the annoyance of wearing mourning for them, and won't even take the trouble to write and say they are alive, why I think they must just take the consequences. Horace might have saved all this by five minutes' trouble; he did not choose to take it, and we reap the benefit."

"Quite impossible, Lilias," said Laurence, much discomposed at her words. "You do not consider what you are saying; no gentleman could possibly do such a thing."

"Then," cried Lilias, rising from her chair and speaking shrilly in her excitement—"then our engagement is at an end, Mr. Courtray. If you care for me, you will keep the money. Will you?"

"It is quite impossible," said Laurence, turning very white. "But, Lilias, in mercy say you do not mean what you have just said. If your uncle had not died, we should have been married fully six months."

"And, as you are so marvelously Quixotic, I cannot be sufficiently thankful that we were not married then," retorted Lilias; "now I have, at any rate, the opportunity of defending myself by withdrawing from my engagement, which I do most decidedly."

She paused, looking at Laurence, and expecting that, when he saw she was really in earnest, he would give way. She could not believe that he would throw away her love and fortune for what appeared to her a ridiculous scruple—but she was far from understanding the character with which she had to deal.

When Laurence fairly realized the fact that she was in earnest in expecting him to retain the fortune that was of

right her brother's, his amazement was great, his disgust infinitely surpassed it.

"If I understand you rightly, Miss Jameson," he said, coldly, "it was with the fortune which your uncle left me that you were in love, and not with me. I can never be sufficiently thankful to Horace for returning in time to save us both from such a disastrous mistake. I shall leave this house to-morrow, as, after what has passed, it cannot be pleasant to either of us to meet. I can only repeat how thankful I am that the enlightenment should have come in time. Good-evening." And he left the room.

From that hour he had never set eyes on Lilias—Lilias Jameson no longer, for, three months later, he read the announcement of her marriage to Lord Sealand, and that "the happy pair had left England in the *Laïs*, her ladyship's health being delicate." Six months after he read of her death of consumption, with scarcely a pang, so completely had the revelation of her mercenary nature disgusted him on the night of Horace's return.

He only remained in England long enough to accomplish the transfer of the money to its rightful owner, and to invest his own ten thousand pounds, and then set off on a lingering sketching tour, through Switzerland and Northern Italy, to Rome, where, when we first meet him, he had been settled for nearly two years.

He had, very early in his career, encouraged thereto by the artist from whom he had learned most, determined to send nothing to the Royal Academy until he had achieved a work that might at once bring him reputation. And now he believed that he had at length before him the picture of his fate. It was one that he had painted with more care, attention, and *love* than he had ever yet bestowed upon a composition, and he felt that its departure would leave an irreplaceable blank in his studio.

Let us describe him as he stands criticising the picture. Tall and powerfully built, with a well-shaped head, covered with close-curling, fair hair; a high, broad forehead, white as snow where it had been sheltered from the fierce Italian sun; deep gray eyes, a Grecian nose, and a fair moustache and beard, which shaded, while they did not conceal, a perfectly-formed mouth, Laurence Courtray was handsomer than most

men to be ordinarily met with. He was immensely popular in society, from his frank, sunny manner and invariable good temper; but no woman had ever been able to flatter herself that she had made any impression upon the heart of the handsome painter. It was not that he had not recovered from the loss of Lilias. A boy's first love is seldom deep, though it is very fierce; and she had too successfully annihilated it for the smallest particle to have survived. But it had been a very painful experience, and had given him a distrust of the sex that had hitherto proved an impenetrable shield against all their wiles and blandishments. Many a woman in Rome was well disposed to welcome the handsome, fascinating English painter as her lover, but hitherto he had been the great friend of many, but the lover of none.

"Halloo! Laurence, at work as usual," exclaimed a young man, entering the studio with the air of an *habitué*. "What! really finished at last? I wish you joy. By Jove!" as he saw the finished picture for the first time, "it *is* beautiful!—it ought to make a *furore* in London!"

"I think it will be accepted," said Laurence, quietly.

"Accepted! I should just about think so. Won't you have an exhibition here, just as a beginning, before you send it?"

"I shall show it to a few people. I think I shall go to England with it."

"And cut Rome?"

"Oh! no. I shall keep this studio, and probably come back in the winter; but I think a little English life will be a pleasant change. Besides, I don't want to get into the trick of painting Italy, and Italy only; and I think of taking a cottage somewhere, and painting English scenery this summer. Cool grays and greens will be good discipline after the wealth of color in which I have reveled here for the last two years."

"I know the very place to suit you—a tiny cottage close to my father's place in Elmshire. My mother only mentioned the other day that it was vacant. Elmshire is a pretty county, and we should be glad to have you."

"It won't make much difference to you—you are never there."

"Oh! my people have gone back there now, and I shall be

there ever so much if I have you to talk to. Let me write to my mother to take the cottage."

"Well, I don't very much mind if you do." And so it was settled.

Lord Elmton wrote to his mother, Lady Elmshire, and Rose Bank was secured for Laurence Courtray. He went down to the Castle with his friend at the beginning of April, to inspect his new abode, of which he thoroughly approved, and then returned to London, there anxiously to await the decision respecting his picture. Although this was his first attempt at exhibition, he was far from being an unknown artist. He had painted much, and his pictures had sold extremely well, and often to people who were supposed to be excellent judges. He had not really much fear that his picture would be rejected; he well knew it to be the best he had ever painted, still he could not help being nervous and anxious. But he was well repaid for his anxiety by the chorus of admiration that arose the first day that the picture was seen in a prominent position in the large hall of Burlington House. The day of the private view people hardly talked of anything else; and Lord Elmton, who was as keenly interested in and as proud of the picture as if he had painted it himself, was perpetually diving into the crowd, and dragging Laurence forth to be presented to this or that magnate of the world of fashion or of art.

Laurence was thoroughly satisfied. He knew the picture really was first-rate, and he did not think it necessary to affect either that he did not know it or did not care for the recognition of the fact by others. He found the well-merited applause extremely pleasant; and without the least affectation or conceit accepted it as his due. He was to have gone down to the Castle with Lord Elmton, for the Ettrick ball; but Alexander Jameson, meeting him a few days before, made such a point of his dining with him, to meet Horace on that particular day, that he did not like to refuse, so his acquaintance with the society of Elmshire was indefinitely postponed.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields—
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.

* * * * *

"When the happy 'yes'
Falters from her lips,
Pass and blush the news
O'er the blowing ships."

Maud.

For some days there was little change in the position of affairs at Ettrick. Mrs. Ettrick was growing very impatient that Lindsay should bring matters to a crisis, and could not understand his procrastination. She did not see how carefully Christian avoided ever by any chance being left alone with her cousin, but she did observe how very pointedly Hyacinth kept out of his way, and it inclined her to an amiability towards her younger niece which she would not otherwise have felt. She could not endure that any of her plans or arrangements should be frustrated, and felt very angry at the ill-success which had evidently attended her scheme for Hyacinth's marriage to Mr. Lambert. Even if it had no sinister effect upon Lindsay's courtship of Christian, and if that marriage took place according to her wishes, it would naturally militate against her intention of becoming the mistress of Ettrick, as, while Sir Loudoun had a daughter left to live with him, she could hardly offer herself as a companion to his loneliness. She wondered sometimes whether all was quite over between Hyacinth and Mr. Lambert. His sudden departure certainly looked like it, but she happened to know that five days afterwards she had received a telegram, and it was hardly possible it could have come from any one but him. It seemed improbable he would telegraph to a girl who had just refused him; still, if Hyacinth had not refused him, why did he go away so abruptly? Anyhow, it seemed to her tolerably certain, and for the certainty she was very thankful, that the girl did not care for Lindsay, and thus a danger was

avoided; for Mrs. Ettrick was persuaded that he was in such a state that the very faintest shadow of encouragement would have induced him instantly to swerve from his allegiance to Christian.

Hyacinth would have been thankful to know how well her wild spirits had served to conceal her secret, and how utterly unsuspicious of it all around her were. Ever since Wilfred had discovered it, she felt as if it must almost be patent to the world, legibly written on her countenance. She shunned Lindsay with a perseverance unspeakably inconvenient to Christian, who, dreading to be left alone with him, terribly wanted her sister as a rampart of defense. So she shut herself up a great deal in her own room, and read much hysterical literature about the political wrongs of her sex, which enabled her for the time to forget her embarrassments; and Hyacinth sat listlessly in the window of her own room, playing with Scamp's ears, and shedding many tears on that animal's devoted head, as she watched Lindsay wandering aimlessly about the garden below, and wondered much why Christian was not with him, for it naturally never occurred to her to imagine that her sister could be indifferent to his devotion. Of Wilfred she thought as little as possible, especially of his determination to return in a year for his answer. She pitied him, indeed, for her feelings just now were very keen as to the sorrows of unrequited love, and she was heartily sorry that her blindness should have caused him to undergo them; but she could not prevent herself from feeling a sort of hazy astonishment that he should have deemed it possible that any one could care for him who had the privilege of being constantly with Lindsay.

The telegram which Mrs. Ettrick had observed was from Wilfred, from Liverpool, dated "On board the *India*:"

"*Sail to-morrow for New York. You will see me May 16th. God bless you!*"

It was a painful reminder, and she had burned it. She tried to make up her mind that he would forget, and to distract her thoughts; and to hide the sinking of her heart at the thought of Lindsay she talked and laughed more incessantly even than usual. She was unable to settle to any of her usual occupations, for a great and exceeding restlessness had seized upon her.

On the Wednesday—the week, day for day, since Wilfred's proposal and departure—she sauntered forth after breakfast, unperceived, as she thought, to the Hyacinth Dell. It was considerably changed in the three weeks that had elapsed since we first saw it; hyacinths and daffodils had passed away, and it was scarcely such a fairy bower as it had been; still it was a lovely spot, and Hyacinth, as she seated herself under the tree, was by no means blind to its beauty. But after she had sat there for some time, a sense of great and utter loneliness came over her—a feeling that all the sun had gone out of her life forever, and that, dearly and devotedly as she loved Christian, it would be almost more than she could bear to see her Lindsay's wife. The thought of watching, of being compelled to watch, their happiness, with her own heart hungry and aching, was too much for her, and, hiding her face in her hands, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

Her four-footed friends gave her all the sympathy in their power. Scamp stood on his hind legs, and licked the tears off such portions of her face as he could reach; Sailor licked her hands, and put one paw on her knee; and old Ronald put his head on her shoulder. Poor dumb animals! so powerless to understand her sorrow, yet so anxious to sympathize with and, if possible, to alleviate it!

But a very different comforter was at hand: Lindsay had followed his cousin to the Dell. Christian was invisible, and it seemed hopeless to expect her appearance before luncheon; he did not see why he should not have the pleasure of talking to Hyacinth. Indeed, ever since that fateful Wednesday, Lindsay had been in a very perturbed state of mind; there was, he perceived, some mystery, which at present he was unable to fathom; but if he could make it clear to himself that Hyacinth, in spite of all appearances, did not care for Mr. Lambert, could he resign himself to marrying Christian without one attempt to secure himself a brighter destiny? He knew all his mother would say, he fully recognized the wisdom of her arguments, but still—Hyacinth and bliss—Christian and wealth—what a contrast!

In a word, Lindsay Ettrick was, for the first time in his life, sufficiently in love to be ready to cast prudence to the winds. Still he had followed Hyacinth with no very definite object, certainly with no clear intention of proposing to her.

But at the sight of her tears he lost all self-control; all thought of Christian's fortune, which was to pay his debts and render him once more a free man, was utterly forgotten, and, kneeling beside Hyacinth with his arm round her waist, he showered upon her every loving epithet, imploring her to let him console her, entreating her to say but the one word which would render him the happiest of men. So amazed was Hyacinth. so dazzled at the prospect of happiness placed before her, that she could say nothing, but sat absolutely dumb, staring at her cousin as if she could not believe her ears.

"But—but Christian!" she gasped at length; "surely you are in love with her?"

"Hyacinth, I never was in love in my life until I saw you. The first night I arrived it was all over with me, but you seemed so occupied with that Mr. Lambert that I feared there was no chance for me. Hyacinth, say there is hope—say you care for me."

"But Christian," said Hyacinth again, "what will she say? what will she think?"

"Hang Christian!" was on Lindsay's lips, but he checked himself with a violent effort, and said,—

"Surely, Hyacinth, you do not think she cares for me? But tell me, dearest, that you do. Hyacinth, you are silent; you know what silence gives," and he drew her to him; "tell me what you were crying for so desperately just now."

But it was out of Hyacinth's power to answer him; she hung her head, while her face and throat burned with crimson blushes. She could not tell him those tears were shed over his loss, over his supposed love for her sister. Besides, her mind was in a perfect whirl. If Lindsay had loved her all along, why had he never shown sign or symptom of it, but devoted himself exclusively to Christian? Why had he left her so completely to Wilfred Lambert? The latter, who had discovered her affection for her cousin, had evidently had no conception of his for her, else he would hardly have talked with such certainty of his marriage to Christian.

And what would Christian's feelings be? She must love Lindsay; no one, Hyacinth conceived, could possibly be constantly thrown with him, as she had been, without doing so; and if such were the case she could not, would not be the one to dash the cup of happiness from her sister's lips. No, it

was sweet to know that Lindsay loved her; it soothed her pride to know that her love was not unreturned, but yet she was firmly determined that no sorrow should reach Christian through her. So with a great effort, and a spasm of agonizing sorrow, she withdrew herself from Lindsay's encircling arm, and said, as calmly as she could,—

"Lindsay, I had no idea of this; you have been so devoted to Christian, it is impossible you can care for me as you say, or that I can listen to you," and she rose from the ground and turned to leave him.

But Lindsay was now desperate. He felt that in proposing to Hyacinth he had risked all—burned his ships, and broken his bridges; for that, after doing so, it would be utterly impossible for him to carry out his mother's wishes respecting Christian. So he laid his hand on her arm.

"Stop a moment, Hyacinth," he said, hastily. "I would give worlds not to tell you what I must say, but it must be done. I swear to you I have loved you ever since I saw you, that I love you as I never before loved a woman; but—don't despise me—I saw you, as I thought, encouraging another, and I complied, or rather endeavored to comply, with my mother's wishes. She had set her heart on my marrying the heiress of Ettrick, that the two properties—it and Glen Ettrick—might go together. Believing your affections were engaged, I was reckless what I did; but ever since Mr. Lambert's departure, I have had a ray of hope that you might care for me. Now, Hyacinth, you know all—do not condemn me too harshly."

It was of course convenient to call this "all," but Lindsay had forborne all allusion to his debts, and to the desirability of Christian's fortune to pay them. Doubtless he was right—such details would hardly have sounded romantic in an avowal of love.

Hyacinth paused. Since the shock she had received on finding that she had quite unconsciously been greatly encouraging and unmistakably ill-using Wilfred Lambert, she felt as if she could hardly judge correctly either of her own actions or of those of others Perhaps it was her own preoccupation that was in fault; perhaps she ought to have seen all that Lindsay told her. But—and to her that was the whole case—it was impossible that Christian could be indifferent to

him; and no matter at what agony to herself, Christian should be happy. So she began her speech bravely, though hesitatingly.

"She was very sorry; she hoped Lindsay did not think she had encouraged him. She had had no idea of his feelings; she was very sorry, but—but—it was impos——" And here a sense of desolation, such as had caused her first burst of tears, made her again utterly break down and sob piteously.

"Hyacinth, Hyacinth, what is it?" cried Lindsay, in dismay. "Why should it be impossible? Do you love any one else? You shake your head. Then what can there be to come between us?"

A pause only broken by sobs; but at length she contrived to articulate,—

"Christian."

"Christian! Hyacinth, I have told you that it is you, and you only, that I love. I could never have even attempted to court your sister, if I had believed you free. You surely do not imagine I love her?"

"But she must love you—it is impossible she should not," sobbed Hyacinth, innocently unconscious that her naïve speech implied that Lindsay was irresistible.

He accepted the compliment as his due—even love could not utterly exorcise vanity; but it was very gravely that he said,—

"Dearest Hyacinth, I have not the least reason to think that Christian cares for me, but I think I may hope that you do; and if such is the case, I swear you are the only woman I will ever marry. Hyacinth, say you will give me hope—say you love me!"

She could not resist the appeal.

"Love you, Lindsay! I do indeed; but——"

But what she was about to say was not destined to be known. Lindsay had heard quite enough, and he caught her in his arms and pressed kiss after kiss upon her lips. For the moment Hyacinth's opposition was overcome—she lay passive in his arms, and gave herself up to the bliss of feeling that her love was indeed returned. For the moment she forgot Christian, Wilfred, his intended return—everything, in short, but Lindsay and her own intense happiness. But remembrance soon returned.

"Oh! Lindsay, Lindsay, what have I done?" she exclaimed piteously, as she disengaged herself from his arms. "You have stolen my secret from me, and it can never, never be. I would die rather than make Christian unhappy."

"And I swear to you that you, Hyacinth Ettrick, are the only woman I will ever marry, so, even if you persist in making us both miserable, what will Christian be the better? Hyacinth, darling, be reasonable. We love each other with all our hearts, and we know it; we have neither of us any reason to think that Christian cares one straw about me."

"Oh! but, Lindsay, you have been so much with her, she must."

"Darling, you think, because you love me, that every one else must needs do the same. But listen; suppose, for the sake of argument, that Christian does care for me, I have sworn, and I mean to keep my oath, to marry no woman but yourself. Surely it would be better that Christian should be unhappy, and that we should enjoy our blissful lives, than that we should all three be miserable?"

"But I could not be happy if Christian were wretched! Oh! Lindsay, you must marry her!"

"Remember my oath, Hyacinth. Besides, would it not be as well to be sure of Christian's sentiments before you make us both miserable for life?"

There was a pause,—this view of the subject had evidently not struck Hyacinth. Lindsay continued:

"Besides, Hyacinth, you are mine; you have owned that you love me, and nothing shall induce me to give you up, till you tell me yourself that that love has died. It is out of your power to take yourself from me until you can truly tell me that."

Hyacinth looked at him almost awe-struck at his vehemence. What could there be in her, she wondered, that twice in the short space of a week she had been called upon to listen to such burning words? Once more she rose from her seat under the beech-tree.

"I must go home," she said.

"Seal our engagement with one more kiss," said Lindsay. "And, Hyacinth, say, 'Lindsay, I will be your wife!'"

There was a pause. She murmured something about first seeing Christian, but he persevered, and, as usual, perseverance

had its reward, and triumphed over indecision. Lindsay was both proud and happy as they walked home together. Hyacinth was happy too, unspeakably happy in finding that her cousin loved her, but overwhelmed with distress at the thought of Christian's prospective suffering.

"I shall speak to your father after luncheon," Lindsay had said, as they stood at the hall-door; and although she had made a hurried protest, she felt sure that he would do so.

"Wednesdays seem unlucky days with Hyacinth," remarked Mrs. Ettrick, with some asperity, when Christian announced that her sister was tired, and unable to come down to luncheon. "It was last Wednesday that she was knocked up, after Mr. Lambert had disappeared in that remarkably sudden way."

Mrs. Ettrick had chanced to see her son and niece returning to the house, and although she by no means apprehended the extent of the catastrophe which had occurred, she was alarmed by their confidential manner, and by Lindsay's appearance of evident satisfaction. She endeavored to waylay him after luncheon, but he eluded her vigilance, and, to her unspeakable astonishment, she saw him follow his uncle into the library. Even yet she did not realize what had taken place; it never occurred to her that Lindsay could be so infatuated as to sacrifice his fortune to his affections. She turned to speak to Christian, but she too had disappeared.

"Come and sit with me as soon as you can," Hyacinth had said, and she was somewhat curious to know what her sister had to impart, for naturally the thought of Lindsay did not occur to her. But when she was seated in the window opposite to her, having safely achieved reaching that position without upsetting any of Hyacinth's innumerable ornaments, there was a long pause, for Hyacinth hardly knew how to begin. She had so fully intended that if she found that Christian, as she could hardly doubt was the case, loved her cousin, she would smother her own feelings, and never allow her to have even a suspicion of them, but now that he had gone to her father there was little use in concealment. So, hesitating a great deal, and blushing painfully, she began:

"Christian, you will never guess what has happened. I am afraid—that is, I hope—I think—I mean I fear—I dare say you can guess."

Christian laughed.

"It sounds like a puzzle. You are afraid, you hope, you think, you fear! No, Bluebell, I can't guess. I never was a good hand at riddles."

"Oh! but it isn't a riddle; indeed it is no laughing matter," said Hyacinth, piteously. "Oh! Christian, if I only knew it would not make you very unhappy!"

"Make me unhappy!" returned Christian, in surprise. "Then it is about you, I guess! Hyacinth, you are engaged to Mr. Lambert! Well, it will be very hard parting with you, but happily you will be very near."

"But it isn't that—at least it isn't Mr. Lambert," returned Hyacinth, half crying with vexation, excitement, and nervousness.

"Not Mr. Lambert?" repeated Christian, slowly. "Then I am sure I cannot guess. I thought, until he left so suddenly, that it was all but settled between you. I can't imagine who else it can be. We know no one else intimately, except Lindsay and——"

"It is Lindsay," said Hyacinth, in a very low voice.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Christian, sharply, a vivid recollection coming upon her of the declaration which she had believed Lindsay to be on the point of making to her only one short week ago. How egregiously vain she must have been to imagine that he cared for her, when, after all, he could only have been going to tell her of his love for Hyacinth! It was very mortifying to have been going to refuse a man who had evidently never been thinking about her, and she looked flushed and discomposed enough to realize Hyacinth's worst fears.

"Oh! Christian," she exclaimed, springing up and throwing her arms round her sister's neck, "I feared this—I thought it was impossible you could have seen so much of him and not have loved him. Oh! how sorry I am he found me crying, and guessed my secret! He would have married you, and you would have been happy."

"Married me?" said Christian—"what! when he loved you? Nonsense! Besides, there must have been two parties to that arrangement, and I should certainly not have been one of them."

"Do you mean to say you do not care for him?" cried Hyacinth, her eyes opening to their widest extent.

"I like him very well as a cousin," replied Christian, "but I am no more in love with him than I am with Scamp. Do you really think him so irresistible?—and how strange it is that I thought all the time you cared for Mr. Lambert!"

"And you are sure?—quite sure? You are not only saying this to comfort me?" persisted Hyacinth, hardly able yet to believe that her sister could have resisted Lindsay's fascinations; and on receiving her renewed assurances, she gave a deep sigh of relief, and burst into tears.

"Oh! how thankful I am! Oh! Christian, I am so happy! —and I did not dare to be happy before, because I thought my happiness would make you miserable—and that would have killed me. I told him so, and he said you did not care for him; but I couldn't believe it. And then he swore he would never marry any woman but me, and he made me promise to marry him; and I—I think he's gone to papa."

"Well, Hyacinth," said Christian, kissing her tenderly, "I wish you joy, with all my heart; and you need not imagine that I am in the very least disappointed. Why, you must know my ideas about marriage."

"Yes, I know what you have always said; but I thought that would all change when you were in love," answered Hyacinth, naïvely.

"Well, I am not, and probably never shall be; so you can be quite happy, without any thought of me to disturb your peace;" and again fondly kissing her, Christian left the room.

She felt greatly surprised, for certainly nothing could have been less lover-like than Lindsay and Hyacinth's apparent relations towards each other; but her principal feeling was mortification and anger at her own conceit in having assumed that he cared for her. Still it was strange—his manner certainly had been very peculiar. Well, it was clear that she knew nothing about love and its ways. She was very thankful now she had not revealed her suspicions of Lindsay's intentions to Hyacinth, as she had once or twice been very near doing; it would inevitably have produced complications, and made mischief.

Meanwhile, Hyacinth was luxuriating in the thought of her own bliss, building the stateliest of castles in the air for herself and Lindsay to inhabit, and enjoying to the full her thankfulness for Christian's incomprehensible coldness, when

suddenly her eyes lighted on the fox's brush over the door. Here was the bitter drop in her cup of bliss. It was so painful to think of any one being made wretched by her great happiness; and of course, if Wilfred loved her as she loved Lindsay, he must suffer on her marrying him as she would have suffered if Lindsay had preferred Christian. She wished most fervently that she had utterly refused to allow him to arrange that he would return and claim an answer from her in a year's time. It was in vain she told herself that circumstances were entirely altered—that of course he could not be surprised at her marrying the man whom he knew she loved. Still, as she thought of it, she felt a chill as of coming sorrow, and she got up, took down the brush, and hid it away in a drawer. She hoped Lindsay would not question her as to what Wilfred had said to her on the island; she wished to do as she would be done by, and felt that, if her love had been unreturned, she would have died rather than it should be known.

Meantime, Lindsay had greatly surprised Sir Loudoun. He had received the young man's preliminary statements, firmly believing them to refer to Christian, and when he heard Hyacinth's name he could not believe his ears.

"Hyacinth!" he said, turning sharply round—"Hyacinth! Surely you mean Christian? Your mother——"

"Was most anxious that I should marry Christian," replied Lindsay; "but indeed, my dear uncle, I can never be happy without Hyacinth. She loves me, and I have sworn to her that no other woman shall ever be my wife."

There was a pause; Sir Loudoun drew a long breath of astonishment before he said,—

"Well, you amaze me, I confess! Your mother seemed so certain of your preference for Christian, and I decidedly thought there was something between Hyacinth and Mr. Lambert. However, I suppose we were both mistaken. We are a couple of old fogies, and have forgotten what love looks like."

If Mrs. Ettrick, who prided herself upon her juvenility, could but have heard him!

"But, uncle," said Lindsay, encouraged by his manner, "you will give your consent?"

"My dear boy, having made up my mind to give you one

daughter, I could hardly in reason refuse you the other. I confess it would have pleased me better if you had chosen Christian; it would have kept the property together. But old heads have no right to scheme for young hearts. My bonnie Bluebell! She is a treasure to be proud of, Lindsay."

"Yes, that she is."

"Well, now, go and tell her you have my full consent and approval; and, Lindsay, a little bird has whispered to me of heavy debts. Let me have a list of them all—mind, on your honor, the whole to the uttermost farthing, and they shall be discharged. No—no thanks. You shall start in life free, and we will hope you will have had warning enough to keep you so."

As Lindsay left the library he was intercepted by his mother, who was by no means in an amiable mood at having been kept waiting so long.

"Lindsay, I have been waiting for you ever so long; what can you and your uncle have been talking about all this time?"

"He has just desired me to give him a list of all my debts, that he may pay them," said Lindsay.

Mrs. Ettrick stared in amazement.

"What could have made him do that? How could he know you had any?"

"He said 'a little bird had whispered it to him,' and as to why he did it, he said we should start free. I asked his consent——"

"To your marriage with Christian?" exclaimed his mother, instantly recovering her good-humor. "My dear boy, I am truly thankful! You have been so strangely dilatory, and have taken so little advantage of her manifest preference for you, that I was beginning to despair of your ever coming to the point. Dear Christian, where is she? I must go and embrace my future daughter."

"Stop, mother," said Lindsay, detaining her as she rose from the sofa; "I have proposed to Hyacinth."

Mrs. Ettrick turned, and stared at her son as if she could not believe her senses.

"To Hyacinth!" she repeated, slowly; "do you mean that you have thrown away Christian's fortune and this place? Lindsay, you cannot have been so mad?"

"I have got instead the only woman I could ever love."

"Pshaw! that may last for a month; Ettrick Hall would last forever. What did your uncle say?"

"He said that he should have liked the properties to have been kept together, and that he thought you would be surprised and disappointed, but that old heads couldn't settle for young hearts."

"Nonsense! I should have thought him more sensible. Did he tell you what Hyacinth's fortune would be?"

"Her fortune! Good heavens, mother, as if I could think of such a thing yet! Is it not luck enough to have got her?"

"His paying your debts is something," said his mother musingly, utterly ignoring his rhapsody; "still of course it is a terrible pity—such a flirting girl too! Now, Christian is steady!"

"Mother," said Lindsay, getting up and standing before her, "if you dare to say anything against Hyacinth, I will never speak to you again," and he walked out of the room, leaving Mrs. Ettrick none the more favorably disposed towards her future daughter-in-law for his rebuke.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And on her lover's arm she leant,
  And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
  In that new world which is the old:
Across the hills, and far away,
  Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day
  The happy princess followed him."

The Day Dream.

NOTHING could well exceed Mrs. Ettrick's annoyance and indignation at the total collapse of her cherished plans. All had seemed to her to be going on so well. It was too aggravating that Lindsay should have made such shipwreck of his fortunes—for love, too—a matter far too insignificant, in

her estimation, for her even to condescend to admit it to a place in her calculations. Perhaps it might not even yet be too late. It was, she well knew, useless to appeal to Lindsay, who could be to the full as obstinate as herself; but perhaps she might be able to work on Hyacinth's feelings.

But just as she was rising from the sofa to seek the girl, and endeavor to wreck the happiness of her young life, in order that Lindsay might be the ultimate possessor of two estates instead of one, Christian entered the room, and at once began,—

"Oh! Aunt Marion, of course you have heard. I am so glad! Hyacinth is so happy, and Lindsay says that papa has been most kind."

This was a blow to Mrs. Ettrick's half-formed schemes; she had contemplated hinting that Christian was deeply attached to Lindsay, and that he had only been moved to say what he had that morning by the sudden discovery that Hyacinth loved him. She had hoped to bind her niece to secrecy, and to induce her to break off her engagement without assigning any reason; in which case she trusted that pique would drive Lindsay to propose to Christian, of whose readiness to accept him she never for a moment doubted. But this scheme required for its success that the sisters should have no communication, and it appeared that Christian knew everything, and had even been talking to Lindsay on the subject. It seemed hopeless to think of inducing Hyacinth to break with him now, and, with a sigh of irritation and disappointment, Mrs. Ettrick subsided once more in the corner of the sofa.

"It is rather strange, I think, that Hyacinth should not have come to me yet," in decidedly acid tones.

"Oh! she has just gone out riding with Lindsay," said Christian. "She ran up to put on her habit as soon as she had been to papa. I came to ask if you would like to drive this afternoon, Aunt Marion. It would be a good day for the visit we ought to pay to the Castle."

Mrs. Ettrick was too thoroughly cross and disappointed to agree cordially to anything; still the proposed visit to Lady Elmshire as nearly pleased her as anything could do under the circumstances. As she selected a becoming bonnet, she reflected bitterly upon how utterly her plans had been ruined. She had so fully intended to have made Sir Loudoun believe

a lady at the head of the household indispensable to his comfort, and to have reigned supreme at Ettrick, after the two girls were married. The first blow had been Mr. Lambert's sudden and mysterious disappearance; still it was clearly Hyacinth who was the attraction to him, and if only Lindsay had been sensible, and had married Christian, he would doubtless have returned, and all would have gone smoothly. As it was, everything had gone wrong, and Mrs. Ettrick pulled the buttons off two new pairs of gloves before her equanimity and her toilet were ready for the Castle.

When she reached the hall, another disappointment awaited her. She had supposed herself to be going in state in the barouche, and instead, Christian was already seated in the pony-carriage, trying to soothe the temper of her black ponies, who had grown fretful from the length of time it had taken to adjust Mrs. Ettrick's bonnet-strings. She by no means approved of the pony-carriage; she did not think it suited to her dignity, and she was, besides, in mortal terror of the spirited ponies. They gave Christian plenty to do at first, but when they had settled down to their work she began once more to talk of Lindsay and Hyacinth, and of her great rejoicing that they had come to an understanding.

"For really," she said, "it seemed to bid fair to be a sort of 'Comedy of Errors.' Hyacinth was so certain that Lindsay was in love with me, that she would hardly believe him when he protested he was not; and then she insisted upon it that I was in love with him, which was quite as great a mistake, and vowed she would not marry him because I should be unhappy, and he had been in despair, thinking she cared for Mr. Lambert, and——"

"Small wonder, I am sure," remarked her aunt, with much asperity. "I am tolerably well accustomed to the ways of the world, and I fully believed Mr. Lambert to be on the eve of a proposal when he disappeared in that remarkable manner. Did Hyacinth refuse him?"

"I don't know at all."

"Not know! Nonsense! Do you mean to say you never asked her?"

"Oh no!" said Christian; "if she had wished me to know, of course she would have told me. I never thought of asking her."

"You must have singularly little curiosity!"

"I was rather curious, but as she said nothing neither did I. I don't think confidence is worth having unless it is spontaneous."

"Well," said Mrs. Ettrick, with a deep sigh, "I wish, at any rate, Lindsay had not chosen to marry a flirt. I wish——"

"How dare you call Hyacinth a flirt!" exclaimed Christian, angrily, and by an unguarded motion of her whip making her ponies swerve into alarming proximity to the ditch. "She is not a flirt; she is everything that is gentle and kind and good, and she nearly shipwrecked her own happiness for fear of marring mine."

"Well, it would perhaps be more just to blame your father, for bringing you up in such utter ignorance of the proprieties of life. Even you, my dear, though far steadier than your sister, and much more like what I should have desired as a daughter, have been allowed to acquire most curious and unconventional ideas, and to do things unheard of in society—such, for instance, as that radical speech you made at the tenants' dinner, which startled every one, and annoyed your father so much."

What Christian's answer might have been cannot be told, for at that moment they drove up to the Castle, and were informed that the marchioness was not at home; and this formed a break in the conversation, which afterwards turned upon the Elmshire family. Just after leaving the park, however, they met Lady Elmshire in her pony-carriage.

"So sorry I was not at home," she said; "but Elmton wrote this morning to beg me go to Rose Bank, and see that all was in readiness for his friend's arrival to-morrow. You must let me bring him over to Ettrick some early day; he is the artist, Mr. Courtray, whose picture in the Academy is the picture of the year. I am sure you will like him, and he will be charmed with the Dell."

"Pray do," said Christian; "we are always at home at luncheon-time;" and they parted.

It was bitter to Mrs. Ettrick, especially that afternoon, when the death-blow to her hopes was still fresh, to hear her niece giving invitations and taking her place, naturally, as mistress of her father's house; but as she could not say so, she could only exhaust her ill-humor by saying sharp and disa-

greeable things on every subject that was started. Lindsay, knowing what his mother's temper could be when thwarted, purposely kept Hyacinth out so late that she had barely time to dress, waited for her on the staircase, and himself led her up to her before dinner, simply saying,—

"Mother, Hyacinth has made me the happiest man in England;" and Sir Loudoun being present, Mrs. Ettrick had no escape from embracing her future daughter-in-law, and looking as if she were delighted at what had occurred. And fearing some of her sharp speeches, Lindsay took utter possession of Hyacinth, and kept her, well pleased, entirely to himself. It was one day that in their ride they suddenly found themselves under the oaks on Brymer Common, that he turned to her and said,—

"I wasn't quite so happy the last time we were here, Bluebell! When you insisted on waiting for Lambert, I thought you were very determined."

"I did not choose to keep you away from Christian, pleasant as it was," said Hyacinth, laughing.

"I never could understand why Lambert went away so suddenly; you seemed such great friends; I suppose you refused him, Hyacinth?"

"We were and are very good friends," said Hyacinth, ignoring the last question, as referring to what she considered the secret of another. "I suppose our intimacy did appear rather sudden, but we had a secret in common," and here she briefly narrated the episode of her one day's hunting; "besides, he was so useful in keeping me clear of you and Christian."

"It is lucky I found out my mistake," said Lindsay, with a particularly vivid recollection of how very nearly he had committed himself when Christian caught sight of the boat adrift. "Well, Hyacinth, if you think you should like hunting so much, there is no reason we should not try a hunting-box at Knotlem next season. Where shall we go for our honeymoon, and—Bluebell—when may it begin?"

"Oh, Lindsay, we are only just engaged?"

"True, dear; but I don't want my—let me say our happiness postponed longer than is absolutely necessary. Why shouldn't we be married the end of next month?"

He had been quite satisfied, without asking her any more

about Wilfred, and she was glad. Of course if he had done so, she must have told him, and she did not feel as if it were honorable to give up what was the secret of another person.

After some demur, and after a reference to Sir Loudoun, the wedding was fixed for Wednesday, July 4th; Sir Loudoun at the same time intimating that, unless Lindsay was very much set upon remaining in the army, he should be glad if he sold out.

Hyacinth's wishes were on the same side, and Lindsay acceded—not without a slight pang. He had to go to London on business, and Mrs. Ettrick had in her own mind arranged that she was the only person who could be asked to superintend Hyacinth's trousseau, and was looking forward to the importance she should derive from it.

But she was doomed to disappointment. Lady Tynedale, it may be remembered, had taken a great fancy to Hyacinth during her visit at Ettrick, and immediately on hearing of her engagement, wrote to beg that the sisters might be intrusted to her care for all the necessary business of shopping. Sir Loudoun accepted her offer with great satisfaction; and the only person not well pleased was Mrs. Ettrick, who, in addition to losing her hoped-for importance, had the mortification of having her offer to stay and keep him company during his daughter's absence courteously declined, her brother-in-law averring that he had not the least dislike to being left alone for a short time.

Lady Tynedale had been considerably astonished by the announcement of the marriage, and had read Sir Loudoun's letter twice over before she could believe that it was really Hyacinth.

"I have done Captain Ettrick great injustice," she said to her husband, with whom she always discussed all her thoughts and opinions. "I told you he was attracted by Hyacinth, but meant to marry Christian, and you see I was wrong."

"I suppose the attraction outweighed the temptation?"

"Yes; and that is just what I did not think it would do. Well, it will be a regular love-match, for she was fond of him even when I was there, though she did her best not to show it. I wonder how she has disposed of that Mr. Lambert, to whom I took such a dislike? Perhaps I did him injustice too."

The fortnight which the two girls passed in Belgrave Square was a very great event to them, as a first visit to London always must be. Lady Tynedale was indefatigable in showing them whatever she thought would interest them; and the amount of sight-seeing they achieved was something marvelous, when it is remembered that all Hyacinth's shopping had also to be accomplished. Lady Tynedale had friends to dinner almost every evening, determined that the girls should make acquaintance with every relation who might happen to be in town.

"We are to have an unexpected lion this evening," she said, one day before dinner. "Lord Tynedale has asked Mr. Courtray, the artist, whose picture you admired so much the other day. It seems he knew his mother intimately at one time. Christian, I think you told me he was going to stay somewhere near Ettrick? I shall send you in to dinner with him, that you may make acquaintance."

Lindsay dined in Belgrave Square that night, and Hyacinth was therefore naturally preoccupied; yet it struck her once or twice, as she glanced across the table at Christian, that she appeared unusually animated, and did not seem to be treating her neighbor with the cool *insouciance* which was habitual with her. Some of the guests who were acquainted with Laurence Courtray made the same remark respecting him. He was always popular in society, but he was more often to be found talking to married women than to girls; and when conversing with the latter, he seldom seemed as if very much entertained.

Christian, however, was a somewhat new experience, and decidedly amused him. It was so clear that she spoke out just what she thought, and never even dreamed of saying anything "for effect," as was the habit of so many of the young ladies he encountered. Then her way of talking of her sister pleased him—her affection for and admiration of her were so evidently genuine. He admired her appearance also, though not considering her strictly beautiful; while Hyacinth's good looks did not strike his fancy in the least. But it was the utter absence of conventionality that pleased and attracted him, and rendered him so much more animated than was his wont.

It did not take him long to discover that Christian was both original and clever, and, greatly appreciating any one to talk

to who was out of the usual conventional groove, he had no objection to devote himself to her for the evening, both to talk and to listen to.

As was but natural, he soon became aware of her political views, and she was enchanted to discover some one who, while confessing that he totally disagreed with her, did not think it incumbent upon him either to laugh or to sneer at her observations. He answered one or two of her arguments by no means in a dictatorial manner, but still in a way that gave her much food for thought, and shook her opinion of her own infallibility as no ridicule could have done. In short, she felt that she had been considered a woman worthy of being argued with, instead of a girl fit only to be laughed at, and she thoroughly appreciated the difference.

"Perhaps we may meet in Elmshire," Laurence said, as he wished her good-night. "I have a cottage there for a few months."

"So Lady Elmshire told us. I am sure my father will be very glad if you will come over to Ettrick. We are rather proud of our Dell, and, as an artist, you must, I think, admire it."

"Well, what do you think of the girls?" said Lady Tynedale to her husband the day after their departure. "Did I say too much of Hyacinth's charms?"

"No; but you did not say enough of Christian. Hers is a fine character, and will be a grand one when the rough corners and edges have been rubbed off."

"You don't prefer her, surely?"

"Perhaps not as a companion at present, while Female Suffrage and Woman's Rights are rampant in her brain; but when these corners have been removed—and I have no fear but that they will be, for she has plenty of sound sense—her depth of character will tell, and make her charming."

"You think those odd ideas will die out?"

"Yes. I think she will, in all probability, do something foolish, entangle herself with some association or other, and as soon as she has done so her sound sense will revolt against the absurdities of the Shrieking Sisterhood, and her eyes will be opened. It will not be a pleasing experience, but it will be good for her."

"Well, you are always right. Now tell me what you think of Hyacinth."

"I think her charming, warm-hearted, and extremely affectionate, but she is neither deep nor strong-minded, and will therefore be easily led, and depend very much on the hands and the set into which she falls. Her spirits are very delightful, but would be better if they were a little more under control."

"She is so new to life, and so happy," said Lady Tynedale, who hardly liked this criticism of her favorite, and yet could not deny its truth. "And what did you think of Lindsay?"

"I did not see much of him, but——"

"But you were not favorably impressed?"

"He gave me the idea of preferring his own gratification to anything else. However, let us hope for the best. Hyacinth's attraction must be very strong to have counterbalanced Christian's fortune, which I should imagine must have been a strong temptation to a man of his type. And now tell me how did you like my young friend Laurence Courtray?"

"Very much, the little I saw of him. It is a fine countenance."

"Ay! with a mind and a heart to match. I was greatly amused to hear him combating Christian's advanced theories."

All the members of the family who could be collected from far and wide assembled at Ettrick for the wedding on the 4th of July, Captain Gordon alone being conspicuous by his absence, though Sir Loudoun, suspecting nothing, invited him as a matter of course.

The evening before, Hyacinth stole away after dinner, unperceived, for a time, even by Lindsay, and accompanied only by old Ronald, to bid farewell to one or two of her especial haunts, and particularly to the Hyacinth Dell. There was a splendid full moon, and the air was still and warm, and laden with perfume from the roses in the garden and from the honeysuckle that formed bowers between the trees in the Dell. She sat down under the beech-tree, the first time she had sat there alone since the eventful day which had decided her fate. She had walked down the Dell often to the boat with Lindsay, but had never entered it alone. And now, as she sat with her eyes fixed on the moonlit lake and the arch of the ruined abbey, what a flood of memories came over her, of all the years of her life during which she had hardly missed for more than a day entering the glen at some time or another. It

seemed almost impossible to realize that she was going away, going out into a new life, in which she and the Dell must at least temporarily be strangers.

Poor old Ronald too! He seemed to have an uneasy feeling that something unusual was going on, and would not leave her for an instant. Poor old fellow! (she stroked the shaggy head that rested on her knee) how he would miss her! He had never cared for Christian, and would pine terribly till she came back from abroad. Then her thoughts reverted to Christian and her father. It seemed as if she had never known before how much she loved them, and she shrank from thinking of the morrow's parting. A passing cloud had thrown the abbey arch into deep shadow, but suddenly it stood forth again, silvery white against the background of the dusky woods and purple hills. It recalled to her the May morning that she had sat at the foot of it and listened to the avowal of Wilfred Lambert's love. From the moment that, sure of Lindsay's affection, she had been relieved from the apprehension of being a cause of unhappiness to Christian, the thought of Wilfred and of his promised return had but rarely crossed her mind; but to-night, when she would so willingly have banished all recollection of aught save the morrow's bliss, the remembrance of him returned again and again, and came upon her with all the depressing influence of an evil omen. She wished cordially she had known where to write to him, to say that there was no longer for him even that hope which he had insisted upon trusting to, despite of her remonstrances.

For the first time, a dread came over her—of what she hardly knew,—and, warm as was the night, she shivered as she prepared to return home. It seemed so hard upon him to have banished himself for a year, in the hope, fallacious as she had earnestly assured him that hope was, of winning her, and to return to find her the happy wife of his rival. She could feel for the pangs of disappointed love, knowing too well what her own feelings would have been if her fears of Lindsay's love for Christian had been verified, and could only trust that either Wilfred might speedily forget her, or else that he might see the announcement of her marriage in the paper, and thus be made aware that all hope was gone, and shape his course accordingly. But how probable it seemed

that, in a wandering life, such as he was most likely to lead in America, he would never see such an announcement, and would return on the sixteenth of May to seek his fate at her hands.

Fearful thought! She put it away from her as fast as possible, and, rising from her seat, and giving one last look down the moonlit Dell (fit scene for the revels of Titania's Court), began her return homewards. She was soon met by Lindsay, quite disturbed at her long absence—for she had tarried in the Dell far longer than she had any idea of.

The wedding-day was a glorious July morning, with a silvery mist of intense heat veiling the distant mountains. It seemed as if not a rose in the neighborhood had been left upon its bush. Hyacinth, though but little known, was a great favorite, and gardens far and near were despoiled to deck the church and do her honor. But among the cottagers on the estate, who had good cause to know her well, she was simply adored, and they vied with each other in the quantity of flowers each could bring, to wreath the arches for her wedding-day. And the school-children were not behindhand. They could not bring the garden-flowers (which were jealously guarded by their parents) for arches and garlands, but they caught the floral fever, and ransacked the woods and hedges for feathery ferns and pale dog-roses, for plumed meadow-sweet, pink musk-mallow, and every other flower on which they could lay their small hands.

It was through a veritable canopy of roses and ferns that the bridal-party moved from the lich-gate to the church porch, where the bride was received by her six bridesmaids, garlanded with hyacinths, which Christian bitterly deplored could not be real. Inside the church were yet more roses, of every hue and shade, making the air heavy with their perfume. There were no tears. Hyacinth trembled with nervousness and excitement, and looked extremely pale, but her eyes were dry; and Christian, with considerable difficulty, followed her example. Sir Loudoun seemed as if he could not take his eyes off his child—the one who, though his favorite, he had never allowed to perceive it, for fear of doing injustice to the other. He had hardly realized before what a wrench parting with her would be.

The ceremony was soon over, and the breakfast was somewhat hurried, that Captain and Mrs. Ettrick might reach

Dover that night, on their road to Switzerland. The last adieux were said, and the bride and bridegroom departed, followed by the conventional shoes and rice, and by the dismal howls of Ronald, who could with difficulty be restrained from following the carriage. As Christian went up to bed that night, she found him stretched across the door of her sister's room, and stooping to caress him, and to try to induce him to come into her room, she found he was dead. The poor, fond, faithful heart had broken when bereft of its idol!

"Don't tell Hyacinth what day he died," said Lady Tynedale, "she might think it a bad omen. All we Scotch people are superstitious, more or less, however much we may deny it. If I were you I'd merely mention the fact, and not even that for a day or two."

"I can't imagine such nonsense," said Mrs. Ettrick, in a supercilious tone; "the idea of any one attaching importance to the time or manner of a dog's death! I should hope Hyacinth had more sense!"

"Ah! well," said Lady Tynedale, with apparent carelessness, "as I said before, she is Scotch, and although you may be right, *I* should give her credit for warm feelings."

Mrs. Ettrick was not very quick, but she perceived a half-suppressed smile on more than one lip, and feeling that Lady Tynedale had, in some way which she did not comprehend, rendered her ridiculous, owed that lady one grudge the more. The day but one after the wedding the guests began to leave. Lady Tynedale and her husband remained a day or two longer, and then no one was left but Mrs. Ettrick. Both Sir Loudoun and Christian wished heartily that she would take her departure, for she was congenial to neither of them.

At length Sir Loudoun, in despair, began to talk of a visit to Glen Ettrick, and asked his sister-in-law if she intended to pay her usual round of Scotch visits that autumn; and if so, if she would spend a few days with him in Perthshire.

Thereupon Mrs. Ettrick, who had been hoping for a prolonged invitation, played her last card.

"My dear Sir Loudoun," she said, "you must not think me either rude or presumptuous in what I am going to say. Fond as I am of our dear Christian, I cannot blind myself to the fact that she has, owing to the independence of the last few years, contracted very strange views, and that it is very

desirable that she should become more like other people. Of course, as a man you can have little or no influence over a girl's mind; it requires a woman's tact and insight. If it would be agreeable to you, I will willingly sacrifice my independence, and take my place here as a chaperon."

It was a bold stroke, but Sir Loudoun paused so long before answering that Mrs. Ettrick made sure that he was weighing, and would accept her proposal. Great, then, was her disappointment when he answered,—

"My dear Marion, I thank you very much for your offer; but besides not wishing to put you to any inconvenience, I much doubt your obtaining any ascendency over Christian. Her character is a peculiar one, but she and I suit each other perfectly, and shall live very happily in our *tête-à-tête* life. Let me thank you again, however, for your kindness."

Mrs. Ettrick was wise enough to know that she had failed, and that there was no more to be said. She left the Hall two days after, and Christian and her father settled down to their quiet life.

CHAPTER XV.

"The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight."
LONGFELLOW.

BUT the quietness was hardly that of former days. Friends and neighbors, having once been received at Ettrick, were constantly calling and sending invitations, which Sir Loudoun, once roused from his seclusion, would not allow his daughter to refuse. Though he was not prepared to think that his sister-in-law's presence was necessary to suppress and to counteract Christian's "views," he nevertheless deplored them excessively, and was disposed to hope that more intercourse with the world, and the amusements natural to girls of her age, might be of service in causing her to forget them.

So he commenced a life utterly different from that he had

lived since his wife's delicate health had caused him to renounce society; and though it was at first a considerable effort, after a very short time he began once more to enjoy it. His natural instincts were most sociable, and it was more the nervous dread of changing his mode of life which had kept him secluded for so many years than any dislike to mixing with his fellow-men. It was very evident that the change was beneficial to him; his spirits were better and his conversation brighter than Christian ever remembered, and he soon began to talk of having large parties at Ettrick in the autumn and winter, and of taking a house in London in the spring, to enjoy Hyacinth's society.

The projected visit to Glen Ettrick did not take place. It had served its purpose by enabling Sir Loudoun to dislodge his sister-in-law, and Christian too well understood what painful memories must be connected with a spot, to too protracted a stay at which her mother's death was due, to remind her father of the suggestion he had made of spending a couple of months there, much as she herself wished to see Scotland.

Lady Elmshire professed herself delighted once more to possess a sociable neighbor at Ettrick, and exerted herself to make everything as pleasant as possible to Christian; and as the castle was generally full of guests, she spent a great deal of her time there. In her own way she enjoyed it greatly, but it was chiefly with the older portion of the guests that she consorted. She liked to sit quietly and listen while Lord Elmshire's friends, many of them either present or past cabinet ministers, almost all of them men of note, who had, each in his line, made his mark in the world, talked of political and social questions. She heard a great deal that militated terribly against her own cherished views, but though she still clung to them, she rarely, if ever, now gave them utterance. They evidently gave her father pain, and living alone with and in such constant companionship with him, she felt that his pleasure and comfort must needs be her chief study. So she contented herself with listening eagerly, and heard a great deal that amazed and confounded her.

Theoretical politics are one thing; it is so easy for the intelligent and ingenuous mind utterly to disregard expediency, to cast party considerations to the winds, to take no account whatsoever of men, but to think only of measures. Practical

politics are vastly different; the party, and the men who compose it, are the first consideration—naturally enough, for are not they the tools with which alone the necessary measures can be forged? But it is a sad and sobering awakening to the political tyro burning with enthusiasm for some measure which to him seems all-important, when he hears it gravely discussed by those whose enthusiasm has given way to experience, and who to him appear greatly to doubt of the real importance of anything. He burns to be an independent member, supporting measures that seem to him to be beneficial from what portion whatsoever of the House they may emanate; they are well aware that no government is possible without a reliable party, and shape their course in accordance with their knowledge.

Something of such an awakening was Christian's when she heard politics for the first time really discussed by the very men through whose hands the government of the country was passing, or had at some time passed. "Expediency;" "A sop to Cerberus;" "Give a little, lest a discussion should arise which would force greater concessions;" "A question shelved because So-and-so was pledged against it, and the government could not afford to lose him."

Such were phrases of constant occurrence, and which greatly excited both her astonishment and indignation. It really seemed as if the government of the country, and the measures required by the people, were quite secondary considerations to the apparently all-important one whether a certain set of gentlemen should remain in office or not! How scandalous! Poor Christian!—she had truly much to learn.

"May I ask, Miss Ettrick, why your eyes are flashing so, and why you are looking with such vehement animosity at Sir Aubrey Pringle?" inquired Laurence Courtray, strolling into the library one day when Christian was listening with all her attention to a discussion on her own pet subject, Female Suffrage. "Has he been decrying the fair sex? You look inclined to murder him!"

Christian laughed.

"Not quite so bad as that; but it *is* aggravating—he treats the subject just like all men; he laughs at it, and instead of answering an argument, makes a ridiculous joke. I never do find anybody who will argue—they always laugh."

Laurence in his heart felt that it was about the most ap-

propriate answer that could be given; but he did not choose to say so to Christian. She interested him considerably—she was so fresh and evidently genuine, and so entirely unlike the type of young lady he was accustomed to meet. These extreme views, which in others would have been merely induced by a love of singularity and display, were with her evidently a matter of honest conviction, mistaken and ridiculous, of course, but still undoubtedly sincere.

There was not a single particle of conceit about her, and none of the giggling self-consciousness so common in girls who have not seen much of the world. It was worth while, if he possibly could do it, to bring arguments to bear upon her hobby that might shake her faith, though he confessed to himself that it was difficult to combat anything which did not seem to him to have a single leg to stand upon. He reflected on all this as he said reproachfully,—

"Come, Miss Ettrick, you can't say I laugh."

"No," said Christian, "you are the only person I ever knew who thinks it worth while even to listen to what one has to say."

"Well, I am glad you do not class me with the laughing herd. I should be quite frightened if you were to glare at me as you did at poor unconscious Sir Aubrey just now."

"Nonsense!"

"What special branch of the topic did he laugh at?"

"Well, Lord Elmshire, who really sometimes seems as if he were coming round"—Laurence smiled inwardly; Lord Elmshire was a very clear-headed, sensible man, little likely to be led away by sentimental vagaries—"Lord Elmshire allowed that it was hard that a woman with a large estate should not have the voice in the country that her smallest tenant has. Then Mr. Merton at once said that sounded very plausible, but that it was the thin end of the wedge, and that the next step must inevitably be universal suffrage."

"And then Sir Aubrey?"

"Laughed, and made the usual jokes about women in Parliament. Now, Mr. Courtray, I cannot see the objection. Women are to the full as conscientious as men, and would use the power conferred upon them at least as well."

"I do not doubt their intentions in the very slightest degree, but I utterly distrust their capacity."

"Their capacity! You do not mean that you think women less intelligent than men?"

"I think, however clever they may be, that they are perfectly different—that their minds, in short, differ to the full as much as their bodies. Believe me, I am very far indeed from underrating the mental endowments of women; and I think a more thorough system of education would be a great advantage to them; but you must forgive me when I say that I am truly thankful to believe that no possible system of instruction could quite assimilate their mental processes to those of men. Remember, I am speaking to you now as if I were arguing with a man."

"And that is what I like," said Christian, eagerly; "anything is better than being either laughed at or else put off with unmeaning compliments. But even if you think women are not qualified to sit in Parliament, why should you prevent their voting? It does not require any very great intelligence to do that, surely."

"Forgive me for saying that your life has been a very secluded one, and that you have very little acquaintance with your own sex. You are yourself of a thoughtful turn of mind, and have evidently read a great many books of which most ladies would hardly get through the title-page. You naturally assume that other women know as much of politics as you do, but such is not the case. Ninety-nine women in every hundred could not tell you which view either party is bound to take of a question, if their lives depended upon it—except, of course, in the fashionable circles of London, where politics are so often discussed that they must hear something of them, whether they care or not."

"But if they did not care, they need not vote. Many men do not; and those who did care might have the privilege."

"But owing to your want of acquaintance with the world, you do not realize how easily the ordinary female mind is influenced. Not caring one straw themselves, women would vote in flocks, as their husbands, lovers, or clergymen advised."

"I can't imagine any one resigning the right of private judgment. It is quite impossible that husbands and wives can think alike on all points. Why should the wife give up her opinion?"

"If she did not there would be a new obstacle to domestic

harmony. By the bye, Miss Ettrick, have you ever seen any of the strong-minded ladies who are at the head of this movement, and who want to usurp all professions, no matter how unfeminine? I suppose you'll never forgive me if I call them the 'Shrieking Sisterhood?' but it is very tempting to do so."

"No, I have never seen any of them. Why do you ask?"

"Only I wish so much that you could. I think nothing could so thoroughly disenchant you."

"I can't imagine why you should wish me to be disenchanted."

"Because I do not like to see you wasting your enthusiasm and your talents in a bad cause. It does not matter when silly people take up such a question, as they generally do for excitement, or to make themselves conspicuous and notorious; but when enthusiasm misleads a clever woman, it is a real pity. If you could be for a short time behind the scenes, and know the pettiness, the miserable squabbling, and the vanity concealed beneath the specious pretext of the rights of women, you would hardly feel very much more interest in the matter."

"But you must allow we have not our rights."

"I fear I shall greatly sink in your estimation—I should be hooted at by those whose opinions you approve—but I must confess to founding my views of the rights and the duties of women upon the basis of Scripture."

"Then you would reduce us to the old position of slaves?"

"By no means. The wife is worthy of all honor and reverence in her sphere; but I would in every way endeavor to prevent her moving out of it."

"But all women cannot marry, and it is very hard that it should be thought unfeminine for them to do any work except teaching."

"But I never once dreamed of advocating anything of the sort. I would educate women as thoroughly as even you could wish, and uphold their earning a living in any manner consonant with feminine propriety; but I think the church, the law, and medicine are as distinctly out of their sphere as the army and navy."

"I do not see why they should not be lawyers. There is surely nothing improper in that."

"A great many cases come before a lawyer which would be

impossible for a lady to defend or to argue without sacrificing her delicacy; and of course if she once undertook the profession, she must not decline cases because she did not like them. Besides, I greatly doubt the power of the sex to engage in legal arguments with men—weighing evidence calmly and dispassionately would not be much in their line—they would judge by feeling and impulse, and be thereby at an immense disadvantage."

"But do you not think that proper education—being taught logic, I mean, and such things, instead of frivolous accomplishments—would enable them to judge and to argue wisely?"

"No, I cannot say I do. I do not believe that education, however much it might modify the natural character, could effect such a transformation as is implied by the change of a woman's habits and modes of thought into those of a man. And I regret any attempt that may be made with such an end. Providence ordained the difference of mind as well as of body, and I think struggles against its decrees are as futile in one case as in the other."

"It seems very hard to be condemned to perpetual inferiority, when all the time it seems quite easy to achieve all that men do mentally."

"Miss Ettrick, you complain sometimes that men argue disingenuously with women; forgive me if I say that the idea of inferiority is yours, not mine. I do not see that diversity implies inferiority, and as long as well-educated women remain in their proper sphere, and do not try to invade that of men, they will find every man worthy of the name ready to uphold them, and duly thankful for their co-operation in any work where the sexes can work together. You will certainly agree with me when I say that there are many things which a woman can do which a man cannot. Why should you, who are clear-headed and sensible enough to have a candid mind, refuse to acknowledge the converse of the proposition?"

Perhaps Christian was not sorry to be called away by Lady Elmshire at this moment, for she certainly had no answer ready. A great deal that Laurence had said was new to her, and she felt that she must think it over before she could answer it. She was so distrustful of any masculine argument on such a topic that she felt little or no doubt that she should

be fully able, after consideration, to refute triumphantly all he had said.

She had little time, however, for thinking over her arguments that day, and on the next she and her father returned home for two days, after which they were to go on a visit to Lord and Lady Tynedale.

Sir Loudoun was usually the soul of punctuality, but on the morning on which they were to start for Tynedale Park the breakfast hour arrived before he had rung for his valet. The servants were afraid to disturb him, knowing how much he disliked his room being entered when he had not rung, but Christian grew alarmed, and receiving no answer to repeated knocks at his door, she entered the apartment. At first it seemed that Sir Loudoun was asleep; he was leaning back in his arm-chair, dressed as he had been the previous evening, a book open upon his knee, and the candles burnt down in their sockets beside him. But as Christian drew near she caught sight of his face, and although she had never seen death but once before, she at once realized that she stood in the presence of the King of Terrors. Summoning all her resolution, she turned to the servants, and gave clear and distinct orders that a groom should go at once to Elmton for Dr. Robson, and should also telegraph to Lady Tynedale.

"'Cannot come—will write,' will be sufficient," she said.

It seemed to her as if she spoke and moved in a dream. She knew and yet did not realize what had happened, though at the same time she had a curious sensation of surprise at her own calmness and composure. She sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, with her hands folded in her lap. She felt she could not move or leave the room until the doctor came, though she knew full well that the time when his presence could be of any avail was long past. The valet, an old servant, came up to her, the tears running down his cheeks.

"Miss Ettrick, ma'am, dear Miss Christian, let me pray you go to your own room. It is too much for a young thing like you to stay here. Dr. Robson can't be here for nigh on three hours, even if so be that James finds him at home. Do go, and let me stay here."

But she shook her head.

"Thank you, Williams. I know you mean kindly, but do not ask me. I cannot go."

And the old servant crept away to the housekeeper, who had been the girl's nurse, to tell her how Miss Ettrick was sitting, "cold and stony-like," and to beg her to see if her inducements could prevail where his had failed.

But Nurse Mackenzie was not more successful than himself. She put her arms round her nursling, and wept bitter tears, and implored her to come and lie down, promising she should be called the moment Dr. Robson came; but to all her entreaties Christian returned the same answer, a gentle shake of the head, and the murmur,—

"Do not ask me. I cannot go."

Mrs. Mackenzie was fain to content herself with making her swallow a cup of tea, and with silently sharing her watch.

In after-days Christian could never recall any thoughts that had passed through her mind during the three hours that dragged along with leaden feet in that mournful chamber. She neither spoke nor moved, her mind seemed paralyzed by the suddenness and severity of the blow, and yet she was conscious of an enormous surprise that she neither sobbed nor cried.

The time seemed like three days before a slight stir in the house betokened the doctor's arrival. Williams stole from the room, and in a few seconds ushered in Dr. Robson. Christian rose, and held out her hand, but she could not speak for some moments; then, in a strange, hollow voice, she said,—

"I sent at once, but it was too late then."

And a very few moments enabled Dr. Robson to indorse her words, and to say that Sir Loudoun had been dead for many hours.

"I was aware of acute heart-disease," he said, "and that is the undoubted cause of this calamity. It is clear that the end must have been peaceful and painless—there is almost a smile on the face still."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Christian, quietly bending down and pressing a long, lingering kiss on the calm brow, and then walking out of the room as one in a dream.

Dr. Robson followed her, after a few directions to Mrs. Mackenzie. He had known her from a child, and felt somewhat disturbed by this stony composure, fearing the effects of the certain reaction.

"My dear Miss Ettrick," he said, laying his hand on her

arm and leading her into the dining-room, "this is a heavy and bitter blow to you, and from my heart I sympathize with you; but I do not like to see you like this. I would give much to see you cry heartily."

Again Christian felt the extreme surprise that no tear had risen to her eyes—that she felt as hard and cold as if turned into marble.

"Can I do anything for you?" Dr. Robson continued—"write any letters, or give any orders?"

Christian passed her hand over her eyes.

"No, thank you," she said. "I am glad you mentioned letters—I must write at once;" and she turned towards the drawing-room.

"You will do nothing till you have taken food," said Dr. Robson, decidedly. "No, indeed, my dear—it is of no use to shake your head; I must see you eat and drink before I leave you. Mrs. Mackenzie tells me you have had no breakfast."

It was a great effort, but Christian yielded; and the first effect of the food and wine which Dr. Robson forced upon her was to unlock the fountain of her tears, and, to his no small relief, she leaned her head on the table and sobbed as if her heart would break.

He let her grief have its way for a time, and then began, gently and judiciously, to soothe and comfort her; and Christian, now that her sorrow had found its natural outlet, listened to him quietly and with gratitude, and thankfully availed herself of his offers of assistance in the necessary melancholy arrangements. The letters she still insisted on writing herself, but they were different from what they would have been if written during the stony misery of the morning. They were naturally brief, for there were many to write. There seemed great doubt whether Lindsay and Hyacinth could receive the tidings in time for the former to be present to take his proper place as chief mourner. Hyacinth's last letter showed that, at the present moment (the second week in August), they would be exploring the Dolomite region, and that their movements were so uncertain that *Poste Restante*, Venice, was the address, but that it would be useless to write for the next ten days. Still Christian, of course, wrote at once, her tears streaming fast as she thought of her darling sister's sorrow at her tidings, and

grieved for the sad interruption to the happiness of her honeymoon.

The next day brought two telegrams—one from Lady Tynedale, the other from Mrs. Ettrick,—each announcing her arrival that afternoon. For the former, Christian was really grateful; she would willingly have escaped the company of her aunt, had it been possible to do so. Lady Tynedale's sympathy, when she arrived, was balm to her heart; Mrs. Ettrick jarred her feelings in every possible way. Possessed of not a particle of feeling herself, she could not comprehend Christian's agony at hearing her adored father spoken of half slightingly as "poor dear man!" or her disgust at the allusions to her own heiress-ship.

The first evening Mrs. Ettrick began,—

"Now, my dearest niece, make all use of me. Of course you know nothing of such matters. You had better let me arrange and order the servants' mourning."

Christian's brow contracted, and a spasm of pain passed over her countenance, but she answered, quietly,—

"Thank you, Aunt Marion, I settled all that yesterday with Mrs. Mackenzie."

"Strangely independent she is," observed Mrs. Ettrick to Lady Tynedale, when the girl shortly after left the room. "I should have expected her to show more feeling."

"I do not think *she* wants for that," replied Lady Tynedale, with a slight irrepressible emphasis upon the "she." "You must remember how long she has been at the head of the household; ordering and arranging come as second nature to her."

"Of course she cannot live here all alone."

"I fancy she will choose to do so."

"But of course it must be represented to her how improper it would be. I shall offer to remain with her myself. Of course it would be a great sacrifice, but one must occasionally make such for family interests."

Lady Tynedale said nothing, but her lip curled with a half smile that greatly discomposed her companion, who read in it a confirmation of her own unacknowledged doubt as to Christian's acceptance of her offer. Lady Tynedale, although her young cousin had never confided in her, felt pretty sure that she cherished no great love for her aunt.

The week passed very slowly, as weeks in such sad circumstances are wont to do, and no answer arriving from abroad, it became manifest that Lindsay and Hyacinth could not arrive in time. In accordance with her father's known wishes, Christian had insisted, sorely to the displeasure of Mrs. Ettrick, to whom show, pomp, and ceremony were dear, on as plain and private a funeral as could well be; and she herself, with Lord and Lady Tynedale, was the only mourner, save indeed the servants and the tenants, each and all of whom mourned the loss rather of a friend than of a landlord and master. Mrs. Ettrick professed herself horror-stricken at Christian's attendance, and utterly refused to countenance it by accompanying her—"it was so unbecoming in a woman! so utterly out of her province! she wondered Lady Tynedale should encourage her!"

"Perhaps under ordinary circumstances I might agree with you," replied that lady; "it is very seldom that a woman has sufficient self-command to render her presence desirable on such a trying occasion, but this case is absolutely different. Christian is the only near relative, her wishes on the subject are very strong, and she has sufficient nerve to be able to avoid breaking down. As to my encouraging her, I hardly see how I could help giving her any support and comfort in my power under her heavy affliction."

Two days after the funeral, the day before Lord and Lady Tynedale were to leave, Mrs. Ettrick made her attempt to install herself at Ettrick.

"My love," she said to Christian in the evening after dinner, "it is time now to talk of future plans and arrangements. Of course, young as you are, it is impossible for you to live alone without a chaperon, and we think the most advisable plan would be that I should take up my abode with you. Of course it will be a trial to me to leave my house in London, but I shall not grudge the sacrifice for your advantage."

Christian looked up quickly, and threw back her head with a proud gesture peculiar to her.

"Thank you, Aunt Marion; you mean it kindly, I am sure, but there is no necessity for your disturbing yourself on my account. I am of age, and quite able to take care of myself."

Mrs. Ettrick was hardly prepared for such a rebuff; however, she made another attempt:

"My dear, you do not know how strange your living alone would be considered; you do not know enough of the world. A chaperon is absolutely indispensable, and surely a relative is the most proper person."

"I repeat I am very much obliged to you," said Christian, calmly; "but I do not care for what the world may say, nor do I intend to be bound and tied by all the so-called usages and proprieties of life. My ideal is far higher, and I intend at least to try whether it is not attainable."

Without waiting for a reply she left the room, and Mrs. Ettrick, confessing herself vanquished, returned home the next day, comforted only by the reflection that Sir Loudoun's personalty was divided between the sisters, and that Hyacinth would inherit a further fifteen thousand pounds besides her settled fortune of one hundred thousand pounds.

CHAPTER XVI.

"It is the little rift within the lute
That by and by will make the music mute,
And, ever widening, slowly silence all.

"The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That, rotting inward, slowly moulders all."

Vivien.

It is not always that a honeymoon is a period of such perfect happiness as had been the case with Lindsay and Hyacinth. Lindsay's disposition was not a very warm one: he inherited something of his mother's cold, calculating nature, and was much inclined to be selfish, and to think his own gratification the prime object of life; but for the time being he was very genuinely in love with Hyacinth, and his love of self faded somewhat before his adoration of her. His felicity had, it seemed to him, no drawback. The debts which had hung like a mill-stone round his neck were paid, and he could hold up his head as a free man once more; he had left the army at his uncle's wish, and had therefore the power of always be-

wailing the curtailment of his military career, though in his secret heart he well knew that he was thoroughly tired of the monotony of country quarters' existence.

A grievance is to many a boon to be really thankful for, and Sir Loudoun was entitled to his nephew's gratitude for having conferred it upon him. Then he was well pleased to find himself the husband of a woman sufficiently good-looking, in spite of that "tip-tilted nose" which she herself so deplored, to pass muster as a beauty in almost every circle—who would, in short, do infinite credit to his taste. It was a subject for congratulation, too, that this beauty was not penniless, as it is so sadly often the wont of beauties to be, but was possessed of the unquestionably comfortable dowry of one hundred thousand pounds, securely invested at five per cent.

Above all, this damsel, in every way so desirable, absolutely adored him; and although this was of course by no means surprising, it was still eminently satisfactory. Altogether, a more thoroughly satisfied person could hardly have been found in Europe than was Lindsay Ettrick, during that *lune de miel* which is, alas! so often dismally productive of disenchantment. And Hyacinth? She, too, was in a seventh heaven of unspeakable bliss. Loving and warm-hearted to a degree, she endowed Lindsay with every possible virtue, and adored him as men are but seldom adored. She had lost every remembrance of the past, and the thought of Wilfred Lambert never even occurred to her; life seemed almost too happy, and she had no thought but intense thankfulness to the Providence that had so richly endowed her.

She was so intensely happy in the present that it quite startled her sometimes to find out how little she missed the companionship of Christian, from whom she had never in all her life been separated for a day; she had so dreaded the separation that she could not understand feeling it so little, until she discovered in it a fresh proof of Lindsay's perfections; he was so charming, so all-sufficing, that with him it was impossible to miss any one, or, indeed, to require anything but his constant presence. She wrote home constantly, feeling that any one so unspeakably blest as she was was bound to impart some of her felicity to less gifted mortals.

Her raptures simply amazed Christian, who could not conceive the possibility of caring for Lindsay in what seemed to

her such an extravagant fashion; but they gave sincere pleasure to Sir Loudoun, by showing him how deeply his child's affections were engaged and how amply they seemed to be satisfied. A smile would rise to his lips sometimes at her rapturous phrases, but he would congratulate himself immensely that the two young people had understood each other in time, and that his and his sister-in-law's well-meaning arrangements had been so completely frustrated. The young couple had determined to leave Paris to be enjoyed on their homeward journey, and had started at once for the Rhine, Lindsay demurring somewhat as to its being "cockneyfied," and his mother declaring it positively vulgar.

"Never mind the Cockneys, they cannot spoil the scenery," Hyacinth had pleaded; "you know I have never been abroad, and I do so want to see the Drachenfels."

And as, of course, at such a time her lightest wish was law, to the Rhine they went; and Hyacinth believed that no other place on earth ever could be so beautiful, though it is open to question whether Lindsay's soft speeches and tender caresses had not more to do with such belief than "the castled crag of Drachenfels," the "shattered wall" of Ehrenbreitstein, or even the whole panorama—

> "The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
> Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen;
> The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
> The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between;
> The wild rocks shaped as they had turrets been
> In mockery of man's art."

Certain it is that every step of the way seemed to her a fresh enchantment, as they progressed from Basle to Berne, Zurich, Lucerne, and Interlachen, finding everywhere a multitude of tourists that might have disturbed the composure of any one less enthusiastically happy. They had seen the Lago Maggiore, and had lingered at both Bellaggio and Como, had lionized Milan, and had finally reached Venice on the 10th of August, whence they were to start for their wanderings in the Dolomite region.

It would be hard to say what had induced Hyacinth to set her heart so steadfastly on this excursion; she had never been abroad before, therefore she could not be *blasé* with the beaten track, and anxious for fresh and untrodden paths, for the most

frequented route was equally new to her. She was a very keen botanist, still Alpenrosen, Gentians and Edelweiss were all to be found in Switzerland, where she had not cared to linger. She was fond of pictures, but had never had the opportunity of becoming such a devotee of Titian as to wish to perform a pilgrimage to his birthplace. She was as yet unbitten by the incomprehensible mania for ascending rugged peaks merely because they are difficult or dangerous, and therefore did not pant to stand on the as yet untrodden summits of the Cima di Fradusta or of the Sass Maor.

Finally, she knew nothing whatsoever of geology, and was therefore absolutely uninterested in the coral reef, or other theories of its formation. Still, from a very early period of their tour Lindsay had found that her mind was full of the Ampezzo Thal and the Val di Livinallungo; of Antelao, Tofana, the Sasso di Ronch, and the Lake of Alleghe, and had, of course, at once consented to explore the district, though looking forward ruefully to much general discomfort, great fatigue, bad accommodation, and worse food. He would willingly have made some delay at Venice, trusting that the fancy might pass away, but the heat was tremendous, and, Hyacinth urging what a pity it was to lose a day of such fine weather, they set out for Conegliano on the 12th of August, the very day of Sir Loudoun's death.

From the time of their leaving the railway at Conegliano, and starting up the Ampezzo Thal, on their way to Cortina, Hyacinth was in an ecstasy of delight. Had he not been so much in love, Lindsay would most probably have become somewhat tired of her raptures; for not possessing an artistic eye, nor caring much for scenery, he was inclined to call the incessant mountain peaks monotonous, could never get the difference between them impressed upon his memory, and horrified his wife by jumbling up the Croda Malcora, the Marmarole, and the Marmolata in inextricable confusion. He had taken the precaution of having a well-supplied hamper of provisions, and they were, therefore, not quite so dependent on the food as he had feared; besides which, he was agreeably surprised by finding something plain, but perfectly eatable, when they made their first prolonged halt at Cortina.

Hyacinth would willingly have prolonged their stay, and have made all the many expeditions possible from thence, but

she was wise enough to see that Lindsay was very soon weary of remaining in one place, so after three days they moved on to Caprile, which pleased him better, as being more comfortable, while Hyacinth could hardly regret Cortina, while reveling in the ever-changing beauties of Monte Cività, and planning expeditions up each of the four valleys at the junction of which Caprile is situated.

As we have said, she was an enthusiastic botanist, and was rather disappointed that Lindsay could not be brought to care for the rare specimens which to her were such treasures. He was quite prepared to admire—who, indeed, could help doing so?—the brilliant colors of the flowers which enameled the grass of the Alp sides; the delicate rose-color of the lychnis, the deep blue of the gentian, the intense yellow of the arnica, the pale pink of the daphne, pierced by the purple spikes of Canterbury bells, the great orange or silvery white lilies, and the pink Turk-caps, with dusky crimson spots. He admired all these without knowing, or even caring to know, their names, and had no sympathy with Hyacinth's raptures at the discovery of an Alyssum Wulfenianum, or a Scorzonera Purpurea, greatly scandalizing her also by not recognizing the extreme superiority in point of beauty of Crystopteris Fragilis over any ordinary English fern.

It was on the evening of their arrival at Caprile that, as they were sitting on a rock admiring in silence the grand *façade* of the Cività, glowing golden in the sunset, Hyacinth suddenly began to talk of home. It had struck her sometimes with pain that Lindsay hardly cared to hear of all Christian's perfections so much as she loved to dilate on them, and, fearful of wearying him, she often refrained; besides, they had so much lovers' egotistic talk to get through, that they had little time for anything else. But all that day the thought of Ettrick had been in her mind, and, little dreaming that on this very day her father had been laid to his rest—that never more in life would her eyes behold him—she exclaimed,—

"How I wish I could peep in upon them at Ettrick now! They will just have come back from Tynedale, and they will be sitting after dinner on the terrace, while papa smokes his cigar, and dear old Ronald will be lying by his side. Poor Ronald! I wonder if he misses me very much? How strange it is that Christian has never once mentioned him!"

For Christian, fearing to make her sister (of whose somewhat superstitious feelings she was well aware) uncomfortable by telling her of the old deer-hound's death on her wedding-day, had carefully left all her inquiries after him unanswered.

"How long it seems since we had any letters!"

"Well, we shall have none till we go back to Venice. I say, Hyacinth, aren't you almost tired of mountains?"

"Tired, Lindsay!—who could be tired of such a sight as there is before us now? That one rock, just like a great golden organ, and all the hills round different shades of violet and purple! Besides, there is so much to see from here—the Sasso di Ronch, and the gorge of Sotto Guda, and the Lake of Alleghe, and——"

"Mercy! mercy!" implored Lindsay, half laughing, half in earnest—"at that rate we shall be snowed up here, and then farewell to Knotlem and our winter's hunting; besides, salmon-trout is all very well—those we had to-night were delicious—but I think we should get rather tired of living upon it."

"But we might do all I mentioned in three or four days," said Hyacinth, relinquishing, with a sigh, her hopes of penetrating to Primiero and Predazzo, and down the Grödner Thal to St. Ulrich and Botzen; "we shall hardly be either tired of the fish or likely to be snowed up by that time; and then we must go back to Cortina, and see Pieve di Cadore. It would never do to be in the neighborhood, and not see Titian's birthplace. Very likely we may never be here again."

"Most likely, I should say; one would not care to come to such an outlandish place twice. I should think three or four days would content us in Venice, and then we will go down to Florence, and make our way home either by Turin or by the Corniche, as we find best."

"Oh, by the Corniche, Lindsay! I have always longed to see it since I read 'Adèle et Théodore,' as a child."

"Well, then, we mustn't lose much time, if we are to go to Ettrick before we settle down at Knotlem; we must be there by the first of November."

"A winter's hunting!—how delicious! Oh! how I hope it won't freeze!" exclaimed Hyacinth, her enthusiasm at the idea rendering her even blind to the last dying glories of the

sunset on the Cività. "Do you know, Lindsay, whenever I think of it I almost wish the time could pass quicker, delightful as everything is here."

"I confess a good fox and a steady pack are worth all the rocks and stones in Christendom, to my mind," said Lindsay, as they rose and strolled homewards in the rapidly-failing twilight.

Their stay in Caprile was not a long one, but they contrived to see a great deal, and to achieve Hyacinth's wish to row across the Lake of Alleghe, and fancy she saw the houses standing uninjured beneath the waters.

"The boatwoman says that sometimes the old church-bells are heard at midnight beneath the water, tolling for the unburied dead," she confided to Lindsay in an awe-struck whisper, as they walked homewards, and his shout of laughter shocked and jarred her.

"Hyacinth, you don't mean to say you're superstitious? Why, you'll tell me next you believe in second sight!"

"Oh! but I do. You must!" said Hyacinth, almost in a whisper. "There is the old piper at Glen Ettrick, he has it, and he saw mamma lying ill on her sofa when she was as well and strong as I am; and then the night before she left Glen Ettrick forever he saw her funeral. Of course I believe in it."

"Well, I am thankful we neither of us have the gift. The piper is quite welcome to my share of knowledge of the future, unless he'll tell me what to back for the Derby. Bother that old woman and her stories! let's think of something more cheerful."

It was late on the evening of the 25th of August that they once more reached Venice, far too late to send to the post-office that night. Lindsay went there in the morning, while Hyacinth was still sleeping off her fatigues, and put the pile of letters into his pocket without glancing at them. It was not till seated once more in the gondola that he took them out, and found himself suddenly confronted by a black-edged epistle, directed to Lady Ettrick. Lady Ettrick! For a moment it did not strike him what that name implied; it was not till he saw his own name, Sir Lindsay Ettrick, that he fully comprehended what had occurred. Sir Loudoun dead! It must have been very sudden! How should he break it to

Hyacinth? He felt so dazed that it did not occur to him to open his letters, and see all that had happened. Before he had by any means settled how to tell his wife he had reached the hotel, and Hyacinth, looking fresh as a daisy in her morning toilette, was claiming her letters, and complaining of his prolonged absence.

"My dear Hyacinth!" But Lindsay's voice was so solemn, and he looked so grave, that she at once took alarm.

"Lindsay, what is it! Tell me at once! Papa!—Christian!"

"My dear, I haven't opened a single letter yet, but——"

"Oh! then you know nothing! Why do you look so grave?"

"Dear Hyacinth, there is a very deep black edge to all the letters, and they are directed to Lady Ettrick."

"Lady Ettrick! How absurd! Why, I am not——" But here the full meaning of the circumstance burst upon her, and with a shriek of "Oh! papa! papa!" she threw herself, sobbing hysterically, into her husband's arms.

Very gently and gradually Lindsay soothed her, and as they read together Christian's account of her father's passing away in such perfect peace, Hyacinth's sobs became less heart-breaking, and her tears flowed fast indeed, but more quietly. Still the agitation, coming after a fortnight of such unwonted physical exertion, completely upset her, and she was soon forced to succumb to a stupefying headache, and returned to bed. Lindsay sat by her till she fell into a heavy sleep, and then returned to the sitting-room to read his own letters. Excepting those purely on business, these were exclusively from his mother; and Lindsay, not being aware of her attempt to domicile herself permanently at Ettrick with Christian, had no clue to the motive for the bitterness with which she spoke of his sister-in-law, and began to think that her views, always most distasteful to him, must have greatly developed since they had left England, or else his mother, who had so constantly assured him that they were of no consequence, mere nothings, sure speedily to pass away, would hardly inveigh so bitterly against them.

"I have really no patience with the girl," wrote Mrs. Ettrick. "She seems to think her own opinion all-sufficient, and insults and flies in the faces of those willing to advise

and assist her;" followed by a great deal more in the same strain, and ending with—"If you are wise, and wish for peace, you will let Hyacinth see as little of her as possible; it would be vexatious if she were to take up these ideas of female independence."

Perhaps his mother was right, Lindsay thought, as he smoked cigar after cigar, and meditated on things in general, and the change his uncle's death had made in his position. He felt a certain gratitude to the Dolomites which had prevented his receiving the tidings in time to return home for the funeral; he hated everything dismal and painful; he was very glad to have been spared a sorrowful duty. There would be no necessity now for their returning before the time originally intended; it would be much better for Hyacinth to have the excitement and amusement of moving from one place to another than to be shut up in deep mourning in England—it would certainly be infinitely pleasanter for him. For Lindsay to determine that any particular line of conduct would be pleasant to himself, was to resolve to follow it at almost any price—certainly at that of the wishes or the convenience of others; so, having settled that prolonged traveling would save him two dull months in England, before the commencement of the hunting season, that matter was dismissed as requiring no further consideration.

Mrs. Ettrick had duly informed him of Hyacinth's further inheritance, and of the advice of the trustees that part of it should be invested in the purchase of a house in London. This perfectly suited his views, and he spent some time in settling the precise locality which he should prefer. Then, passing to other matters, he determined that he would take his mother's advice, and separate Hyacinth as much as possible from her sister. Certainly she always rather laughed at Christian's ideas and fancies; still, there was no knowing. It would be very disagreeable to him to have a wife who cherished ridiculous notions about women's rights (as if women had any, or as if they hadn't got more than they could possibly want—he wasn't quite sure which), so it was as well to keep on the safe side, and avoid the danger of contamination.

It was a very good thing—a most convenient thing—that, as Sir Loudoun—poor old man!—was to die, he should have done so at the precise moment which rendered their imme-

diate return home unnecessary. Of course they must have gone to Ettrick, and the sisters would have been thrown together; and women were so weak, there was no knowing what absurd fancies Hyacinth might not have contracted. It never struck him that, having lived with Christian all her life without imbibing any of her opinions, it was slightly improbable that Hyacinth should all at once be ready to embrace her sister's views; but as it would now have affected his own comfort and convenience, he foresaw danger, and took his precautions accordingly.

He was hardly prepared for his wife's first words when they met again.

"Lindsay, dear, how soon can we get back?"

"My dear Hyacinth, there is no need to alter our plans. Of course, if we had known in time, we must have hurried home; but now there is no necessity—the business can wait very well till October."

"I wasn't thinking of business," said Hyacinth, melting into tears, "but Christian. She is all alone, and so sad; I must go to her."

Now Lindsay, fond as he was of his wife, was still fonder of himself. He had settled his plans for his own satisfaction, and by no means approved of being asked to change them. Besides, he felt an uneasy consciousness that it was unkind to refuse his wife's very natural wish to be with her twin sister in their mutual sorrow; and feeling himself in the wrong, he took the usual course of those who are so—of being pettish and aggrieved.

"I don't know about 'must,'" he said, crossly; "I think, when I say it is unnecessary, that ought to be enough for you. Once for all, Hyacinth—I don't choose you to take up any of Christian's odd ideas of female independence. A wife's business is to do what her husband tells her, and be satisfied. We shall start for Florence on Monday;" and so saying, he swung out of the room, feeling ashamed of himself for having been so cross, and angry with Hyacinth for having made him so.

"Must," indeed! Why, if he had determined to stay in Italy for a year, she ought to have acquiesced, and been delighted he was pleased! By which the reader may perceive that Sir Lindsay Ettrick, though really very much in love,

was to the full as tyrannical and unreasonable, when anything disturbed his plans, as if such had not been the case.

When he left her, Hyacinth sat motionless for nearly an hour. It was not regret at not being allowed to go to Christian that so stunned her, bitter as the disappointment was; it was the discovery of the clay feet of the idol—of the fact that Lindsay, whom, in her loving enthusiasm, she had worshiped as perfect, peerless, and unapproachable, cared more for his own pleasure than for her earnest wishes, and at the faintest suggestion of opposition had been unmistakably cross. It was a rude shock; such necessary and inevitable awakening is always bitter, though it is one of the necessities of the close communion of married life. The man finds the girl he has worshiped as an angel is, after all, but a woman, with all a woman's faults, rendering her truly human; but the shock is generally greater to the wife than to the husband, for she has greater powers of idealization, and is ready, not only to love, but to reverence and adore.

Hyacinth had no feeling of loving Lindsay the less, but it was a terrible blow to know that she could no longer look up to him as absolutely faultless—as something so infinitely better than herself that she could lean upon him to help her in growing daily better. It was so completely this feeling that occupied her that she never even felt hurt at his unkindness—never thought of remonstrating with him as to his decision, but at once tried to enter into all his anticipations of the pleasure to be derived from Bologna, Ferrara, and Florence. Still Lindsay, coming in suddenly, would occasionally find her sobbing bitterly over one of Christian's letters, and, feeling guilty, would wax wroth, and accuse her angrily of caring more for her sister than for him. He had not strong feelings himself, and could not realize how sore a blow her father's death was to Hyacinth's warm and sympathetic nature; it did not make *him* unhappy—he was able coolly to calculate its advantages—a title, a certain increase of income, the absence of any one with a right to criticise what he might choose to do; and he could not realize the difference to his wife, who shuddered at her new title, knowing whose death had given it to her—who thought less of money in a twelvemonth than he did in a quarter of an hour, and who would have known, had she given it a thought, that her kind, indulgent father was the last man in

the world to interfere in the slightest degree with the pleasures of either herself or her husband. Certainly, although love had brought them together, Lindsay and Hyacinth Ettrick were hardly congenial souls.

CHAPTER XVII.

> "There's a downright honest meaning in her;
> She flies too high! she flies too high!—and yet
> She asks but space and fair play for her scheme."
>
> *The Princess.*

We must do Christian the justice to say that in her letters she carefully refrained from expressing any wish for her sister's return. She would have undergone any loneliness or personal discomfort rather than have shortened by an hour the happiness which Hyacinth's earlier letters so vividly expressed in seeing new places, beautiful pictures, lovely scenery, all in the company of her idolized husband.

Imbued herself with something near akin to contempt for matrimony, firmly convinced that it would be utterly impossible to her ever to fall in love, she had still a sort of curious reverence for any one so fervently attached to another as Hyacinth was to Lindsay; although how her sister could ever feel such inordinate affection for any one so uninteresting as her brother-in-law appeared to her, she was totally at a loss to imagine. It must, she thought, be some one of a very different type to whom she could ever consent to surrender her liberty, even if such a thing were ever possible, which she did not believe it to be.

It is seldom that twin sisters have such widely divergent natures as had Christian and Hyacinth—the one so self-reliant, though neither conceited nor absolutely self-satisfied; the other so warm-hearted and clinging in disposition, so inclined to idolize those she loved, and so willing to be blind to their defects.

In spite of her self-reliance, Christian felt keenly the loneliness of her position, when her refusal to accept her aunt as a

chaperon and permanent inmate had caused her to be left absolutely alone. She had always been accustomed to spend a good deal of time alone, poring over books and pamphlets in her own room, but there had always been the rides in which Hyacinth had been her companion, or the walks to the different cottages where they had always gone together, and the rowing on the lake to be practiced in company. Then, too, there had been the evenings when their father had always sat with and often read to them, or had made her his antagonist in his favorite game of chess, while Hyacinth sat at the piano singing fragments of one old pathetic ballad after another. Now there was no break to the monotonous solitude, and, self-sufficing as her nature was, Christian gave many a sigh and bitter tear to the happy days that were past.

Sir Loudoun, conscious of his own greater love for Hyacinth, had, in his anxiety not to show undue partiality, always been more demonstrative towards Christian, and she had returned his manifestations of affection with interest. Though not of so clinging a nature or so dependent for happiness upon affection as was Hyacinth, she was essentially warm-hearted, and her father had been the object of her adoration; so it was but natural that she should feel most deeply the blank left by his death.

At first she never thought of the change which it made in her own position, but gradually the sense of her increased responsibilities began to dawn upon her, and she was forced to acknowledge to herself that the management of an estate was by no means the easy child's play which she had always hitherto considered it. She had excellent abilities and a strong will, and devoted herself heartily to learning all that was necessary for her to know; but it mortified her terribly that the agent, a man of no education, save in his own profession, should know so much more than she did, and be able to set her right in matters which, when once pointed out, seemed really to have required but the smallest grain of common sense to render their comprehension easy.

She had read and thought so much of fixity of tenure, and other cognate subjects, that she had imagined she should be able to do and to understand everything at once, and felt utterly humiliated at finding how infinitely more useful was practical conversance with a subject than theoretical knowledge.

It was her first experience of the fact, and it both disturbed and irritated her, partly because, almost unknown to herself, it brought an uneasy feeling that perhaps her favorite theories of female superiority might also change, in some incomprehensible way, when practically approached.

Christian was by no means of the stuff of which blind devotees are made. She was thoroughly honest, and willing to be convinced by fair argument, if only the arguer did not offend her prejudices at the outset by laughing at her or by adducing reasons calculated to throw ridicule on the cause. She had never forgotten Laurence Courtray's arguments, because, as she said to herself, he had argued fairly, and had not thought it sufficient to laugh and draw ridiculous pictures of social absurdities, because he was talking to a woman; he had treated her as a reasonable being, entitled to an opinion, and to being argued with accordingly. Of course she mistrusted his opinions on the subject; he was a man, and therefore naturally prejudiced in the belief that in his own sex alone was either intellectual power or common sense to be found; still, she was forced to confess herself unable to refute some of the arguments which he had used. She had naturally contrasted him with Lindsay, the only other young man whom she had ever known at all intimately (for Wilfred Lambert had been so completely engrossed with Hyacinth that she had had but little intercourse with him), and her comparison was hardly to her brother-in-law's advantage. Even when doing his best to make himself agreeable to her, Lindsay had hardly been able to dissemble his annoyance at, and disapproval of, her "strange ideas;" and when, having made up his mind that Hyacinth was indispensable to his happiness, he cared no longer to propitiate her or to seek her favor, he had once or twice been bitterly satirical on the subject of strong-minded women.

Christian had refrained from answering him. She knew Hyacinth would be pained if she thought her sister was hurt, and she loved her far too dearly to wound her needlessly, so she had laughed off the sarcastic speeches at the time, bitterly as she resented them. She was annoyed to find how they would persist in recurring to her; tell herself as she would that Lindsay's opinion on such matters was of not the slightest consequence, she could not forget the sarcasms he had

uttered. There had been no gentle, grave argument, such as Laurence Courtray had used; and as she dwelt on this, Christian was fain to confess to herself that to these arguments she had as yet failed to find an answer.

As the weeks passed slowly and quietly by, she had ample time for all these thoughts; it did not surprise her much that Lindsay and Hyacinth did not return. Hyacinth made no mention of her disappointment at not coming home at once; it seemed to her that it would sound like a reproach uttered against Lindsay, and she adored him too thoroughly to bear the idea of giving such an impression. So Christian naturally believed that, once abroad, her sister did not care to come home; and, much as she longed for her companionship, rejoiced, unselfishly, that she should have this enjoyment and distraction to lighten her grief. She little guessed how far oftener Hyacinth's eyes saw her and Ettrick than the lovely views or beautiful pictures at which she gazed; or how often she longed for wings that she might fly home, and, throwing herself into her sister's arms, weep with her for the father they had loved and lost.

Christian would hardly have believed that Hyacinth had begged to come home and had been refused. It would have seemed to her impossible that a husband could have negatived such a natural desire of one whom he professed to love so devotedly. She had yet to learn that, however much a truly selfish person may love another, he yet loves himself infinitely better, and that he is perfectly certain to sacrifice her wishes to his without the faintest compunction, and to feel vastly aggrieved if she remonstrates ever so slightly. Rather than have crossed her darling sister's wishes, Christian would have endured any inconvenience herself, and it naturally never occurred to her that Lindsay's views were by no means so self-denying. So she never doubted that it was Hyacinth's wish to carry out the programme of their tour as originally arranged, and wrote most guardedly about her own proceedings, for fear she should convey the idea that she was lonely, and disturb her comfort.

She certainly had no lack of occupation. She considered it part of her duty to understand all that the agent said to her about the Home Farm, and had therefore entered on a rather ex' nded course of agricultural reading, in which, for want of

a pilot, she often felt sadly astray. Then, knowing all the tenants and cottagers near at hand, she felt it but right to make acquaintance with all those living at a greater distance. One of her first acts had given great umbrage to all her neighbors, and had raised a chorus of complaint among her tenants. Disregarding all Mr. Margesson's representations, she had at once raised the wages of every laborer in her own pay five shillings a week.

"I cannot understand," she said to Laurence, when she met him one day in one of her rides to an outlying farm—"I cannot understand why every one should object. I do not ask any one else to pay it—it is my own money. I surely have a right to make my own people comfortable at my own expense!"

"You forget that you make all the rest of the laboring population discontented. They do not understand that you can afford such expensive crotchets, while others cannot."

"Crotchets! Mr. Courtray, you cannot deny that the laborers are shockingly underpaid."

"I should like as much as you to see their wages increased, if they were not certain to go straight into the pockets of the public-house keepers, and if the farmers could afford to pay more than they are doing."

"Oh! but the farmers are well off."

"I think, if you gave the matter a little more consideration, you would hardly say so. In some counties, where the farms are large, and in the hands of men with ample capital, it may be the case, but here the holdings are small, the farmers live from hand to mouth, and are often, in fact, though not perhaps in outward appearance, as poor as their workmen. Your sudden move will be very hard upon them."

"But it is very unreasonable of the men to expect that every one should do the same. Besides, it does not make the men on other farms a bit worse off than they were before, that my men should be better paid."

"And she fancies she understands political economy, and is as fit to legislate as a man!" thought Laurence, with a pitying smile, but he only said, "It is, I think, only human nature that they should be envious when they see people with whom they live in constant intercourse, and with whom they have, until quite lately, been on a level, suddenly raised so very much above them. But there is another rule they say you

have made, that I can hardly believe—they say you pay the men the same even when they do not come to work for a day or two in the week. Surely this cannot be the case?"

"Yes it is, though," said Christian, quietly. "It is very hard the women and children should suffer if the man chooses to be idle. Besides, I do not think it will happen often. When they find they are paid all the same, their sense of honor and integrity will prevent them staying away and cheating me of work."

"And you really believe this?" said Laurence, looking at her with amazement.

"Yes. Why should I not? One always likes to be trusted. Why should they not feel it a pleasure as well as we?"

"I am afraid your ideas are too Utopian for modern life," said Laurence. "However," with a smile, "I perceive, Miss Ettrick, that nothing but experience will convince you; and perhaps with such strong views it would be too much to expect you to refrain from trying the experiment, though I wish it could have been done with less injury to others."

"She certainly is a brave, honest-minded girl," he said to himself, as he pursued his way homeward, and set to work at a half-finished study of the Hyacinth Glen. "It is a thousand pities that she should be so misguided. It is not vanity in her case, as it generally is when women take up 'views' and 'notions.' She is thoroughly in earnest, and as free from self-consciousness or conceit as—Rover. Unless I greatly mistake, it is a grand character, and only wants softening. If she could only fall in love, now, with some really sensible man who would take pains to convince her, and not sneer at her ideas as ridiculous, I have no doubt she would develop into a really remarkable woman. Lady Elmton told me, though, that she utterly contemned the idea of matrimony—'thought it degrading to a woman to become a chattel.' Ha! ha! Well, generally one would laugh, and say that she only said so until she was asked, or until the right man came in her way; but I have no doubt she believes that she feels what she says. All that nonsense will vanish pretty soon, though, when once she is in love. Pshaw! why on earth should I concern myself about the vagaries of a girl of whose existence I had never heard six months ago? I suppose it is her manifest *truth* that attracts me.

Heaven knows it's rare enough in women—or in men either, for that matter; but in women almost unknown. Well, poor things, I suppose they can't help it—it's their nature to use deceit, the weapon of the weak; besides, they are always brought up to think all their little arts and schemes so alluring:—I wonder how this girl escaped? How handsome she looked to-day on that gray Arab; and yet I don't believe the thought of her appearance once crossed her mind. She only thought of what she was talking about—so strangely unlike a woman."

By all which it will be seen that Christian had made a considerable impression on Laurence Courtray's mind; besides the effect which her style of beauty had had upon his eye. His portfolio was full of sketches of her, done chiefly at Elmton Castle, and all utterly without her knowledge. As he imagined, she was perfectly free from self-consciousness, and though, when she thought of the matter at all, she knew she was, if not absolutely handsome, decidedly good-looking, such thought came but rarely, and was never dwelt upon.

It would have been somewhat difficult to define her feelings respecting Laurence's arguments; she most certainly could not have done so herself. For one thing she was duly grateful—he did not laugh at her, but said what he had to say as gravely as if he had been arguing with the Lord Chancellor. But for that very reason his evident disapproval made her the more uneasy. She did not distrust his judgment so much on the question of the laborers as on that of Female Suffrage; the prejudice of sex was hardly likely to interfere in the former as in the latter. Of course a man would be sure to think any independent and unconventional action wrong in a woman; still, she felt uneasy under his censure, and gave his words an amount of consideration that would greatly have surprised him, had he known of it. Truth to tell, although herself, as yet, perfectly unaware of it, Christian, left utterly alone in a trying and difficult position, was beginning to feel the want of some one to lean on—of some one to whom she could turn for advice and counsel. Of course she would indignantly have repudiated the notion, and have laughed to scorn the suggestion that one of the sex gifted, as she so steadfastly maintained, and really believed, with superior intelligence and perception, could possibly require advice or assistance from a man.

But every day her perplexities increased. The agent was a

steady-going, old-fashioned man, who utterly disapproved of all his young mistress's vagaries—or, as he denominated them, "crinkum-crankums,"—and was by no means inclined to spare her any of the trouble or the inconvenience which her fancies produced. Christian grew bewildered and sick at heart as complaint followed complaint from every tenant on the estate, as to the effect on the labor-market of the sudden rise in the wages on her Home Farm. What to do she hardly knew. It seemed almost impossible to hold on her own way in face of such a determined opposition, and yet she was too proud to yield, and acknowledge that she had been in the wrong. Indeed, she was by no means convinced that such was the case, and fell back on her own peculiar theories for comfort and consolation. Men were so greedy of money, she argued, and never could see the propriety of anything not conducing immediately to their own advantage. Why should the farmers care so much to be rich? They ought to be satisfied with moderate gains, and spend the rest on the comfort and improvement of their men. If women were but allowed to enter their proper sphere, to take their proper place in Parliament, and influence the councils of the nation, how very different everything would be! The poor would be considered, no one would care for undue wealth, and, in short, a species of millennium would be inaugurated.

But while Christian was occupying herself with these and similar delusive fancies, her conduct was producing results of which she had little dreamed. Elmton, the manufacturing town about ten miles from Ettrick, was a very hot-bed of radicalism and sedition. Trades-unionism was rife, rattening far from uncommon; and, naturally, there were not wanting paid agitators, anxious to set class against class, man against master, and to foster any symptoms of discontent among the rural population, who had hitherto held wisely aloof from unions and demonstrations. It was a matter of course that Christian's unwise measures should give rise to general discontent among the less fortunate laborers of Elmshire: who could see no reason why they should be expected to work for fourteen shillings a week when the Ettrick laborers had been suddenly raised to nineteen. It was a grand opportunity for the agitators, and they swarmed over the country like locusts, angering the men, telling them how ill they were treated, and

inciting them to united action against the masters. If the harvest had not been over, they would in all probability have succeeded in organizing a strike; but even the slow agricultural intellect was keen enough to perceive the danger of angering the employers before the beginning of winter; and the agitators themselves felt that it was the dead season, when no pressure could be brought to bear with advantage on the farmers, besides judging it useless to burden the Union with the support of the laborers during the winter. So they contented themselves with working steadily and influencing the people's minds, waiting their opportunity to call out their men when they should judge the time convenient.

Naturally the county was in a ferment; the farmers, well knowing what was going on, and the pressure that would, at the first busy moment, be brought to bear upon them, were combining among themselves for protection—anathematizing the Union, quietly dismissing all the hands that they could possibly do without, and uttering fierce denunciations against Christian as the exciting cause of all this mischief.

Bitterly did she now repent her hasty action, and very sore was her mortification at finding that her trust in the honor of her dependents had been sadly misplaced. Finding that the wages were paid whether they worked or not, there were few men on the estate who ever did a full day's work, and many were frequently absent for days together, conducing not a little to the prosperity of the public-houses in the various surrounding villages. It is always painful to a generous mind to find its confidence in the integrity of others misplaced, and Christian felt this with especial keenness, from the fact that she had been so very certain of the success of her scheme. It was very unpleasant that, at her very first essay, she had so grievously failed, and had, indeed, only succeeded in rendering herself a species of firebrand in the county.

"What am I to do?" she said piteously to Laurence one day, when she encountered him, as was not unfrequently the case, in her ride. "Lord Elmshire rode over this morning, and advised me to issue a notice that, from this day fortnight, matters, both as to wages and stoppages for absence, must revert to their former state. I suppose it must be done. I have no right, as he pointed out, to upset the whole county, as it really seems I have done, although it appears to me most

unreasonable that my conduct should have had such an effect. He wants me to go away for a time, but I told him that was not to be thought of."

"Have you quite decided? I think it would be a very good plan."

"Yes, I am quite determined. I have not intended to do harm, but it seems I have done it, and it would be cowardly to run away from the consequences."

"You will find the new order produce considerable irritation among your own people, I fear."

"Yes, I fear so; but I do not see what else I can do. I might keep it up through the winter, and revert in the spring. That will be best. I had not thought of that before."

"Believe me, you had better take Lord Elmshire's advice, and do it at once; they will only feel the withdrawal the more for having enjoyed the increase longer."

"But they will have had a winter with more comforts. I know what I will do, Mr. Courtray. I will issue the notice at once, that the wages will be reduced to the common level of the county on the 1st of March, and restore the old rule at once as to stoppages for idle days."

"I fear you did not find that they justified the confidence you reposed in them?"

"No," and Christian's countenance fell, "indeed they did not; but, poor people, is it quite fair to blame them? They have never been accustomed to be trusted, and so their honor was hardly appealed to as I anticipated, or as it would have been had they been better educated."

"What an enthusiast you are!" said Laurence, looking at her admiringly. "Miss Ettrick, with your faith in human nature you ought to do great things, but I fear you are laying up for yourself innumerable disappointments."

"Lord Elmshire told me I was terribly visionary," said Christian, smiling; "it amused me to hear him use the word —it is what my sister always calls me."

"You expect Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick soon, do you not?"

"Yes, this day week, the 21st; they spend one week with me before they go to the hunting-cottage they have taken at Knotlem. Dear Hyacinth, it seems an age since she went away!"

If Laurence Courtray had been told that night, as he reclined in the luxurious arm-chair before the fire, watching the smoke-wreaths curl up to the ceiling and meditating on his afternoon's meeting with Christian, that the interest he took in her was fast assuming a tender warmth, he would have laughed the idea to scorn; yet such was most assuredly the case. He would have said, for he firmly believed, that his love for Lilias Jameson had been the love of his life, and that when that had been destroyed his power of loving had died with it.

And for a long time such had really been the case; but now, thrown into communication with a totally different character, with a nature true and pure as unsunned snow, unworldly and guileless as a babe's, his heart was beginning to thaw once more, and, unknown to himself, he was fast falling in love with Christian. He saw her faults—the willfulness that precipitated her against advice into taking imprudent steps; the childish folly and want of accurate reasoning power that made her the visionary girl she was, and induced her to adopt the extreme views and urge the ridiculous arguments that she did; the pride that made her loth to acknowledge that anything she had said could be wrong.

But if he saw her faults, he saw her virtues too—the perfect honesty of purpose, the unsullied truth and candor, the earnest thought for the good of others, excellent in itself, however defective and disastrous might be the manner of its working. All these he saw clearly, and they made him murmur again that night what we have heard him say before: "A grand character—such perfect truth—a grand character, but it wants softening."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Maintaining that with equal husbandry
The woman were unequal to the man.
They harped on this."

The Princess.

"Those detestable
That let the bantling scald at home, and brawl
Their rights or wrongs like pot-herbs in the streets."

The Princess.

In a back street in one of the least aristocratic parts of Elmton stood a dingy house, on the wire blinds of which was inscribed, in gold letters, "Society for the Emancipation of Women;" and above the lowest of the three bells that graced the side of the doorway was a brass plate bearing the word "Secretary." The house was evidently let in separate floors, for the second bell bore the name of "Miss Deakin, Milliner and Dressmaker;" and the uppermost that of "Mr. Simpkin, Taxidermist."

It is, however, with the ground-floor apartments that we are principally concerned. On the right-hand side of the narrow entrance passage was a door leading into the front parlor, on which was painted in large letters "Committee Room;" while another, some few feet farther on, was marked "Private." Entering this, we must present our readers to Miss Sophonisba Jinks, Secretary to the "Society for the Emancipation of Women," and to Miss, or, as she styled herself, Dr. Sarah Jeffreson Barker, Treasurer of the same. As the latter lady was the most important member of the society, nay, was even the sole cause of its existing at all in the town of Elmton, she deserves our first notice.

Sally Barker, as she had always been called in her youth, was the daughter of a chemist in the town, and having lost her mother early in life, was left considerably to her own devices. Of a keen, shrewd, and cunning disposition, she had very early the sharpness to see that education would be of advantage to her; and as her father, when teased on the subject, invariably told her to make puddings and darn stockings—

that had been learning sufficient for her mother, and would do well enough for her—she commenced educating herself. A very curious and heterogeneous smattering of many things she contrived to acquire, for her natural abilities were good, and her perseverance excessive; but owing perhaps to the greater facilities afforded by her father's professional books, the study which she most affected was that of medicine.

Unspeakable was the worthy chemist's horror and dismay when, one day when his daughter was about five-and-twenty, she coolly informed him of her desire to go to America and study medicine. His wrath knew no bounds, and he poured forth torrents of vituperation on his daughter's head, by which, however, that damsel was not one whit disturbed. Still, as he held the purse, and was little likely to unloose its strings in furtherance of a design so distasteful to him, she was fain to renounce her project for the time, and remain at home, where, as the next episode in her life, she fell violently in love with her father's new assistant, a somewhat good-looking youth of nineteen.

Nature had been by no means bountiful to Sally Barker; it had given her a wide mouth, with large, uneven, and discolored teeth, a hooked nose, cold gray eyes, a high but very narrow forehead, coarse sandy hair, and a complexion hardly discernible for huge freckles. Such an *ensemble*, as may be imagined, was by no means captivating, and the more enamored the hapless Sally grew, the further Mr. Jonathan Saunders retired from her approaches. Love, as we all know, is blind, and it was long before she discovered that all her hopes were vain; indeed, it was not till Mr. Saunders one day announced himself as engaged to the grocer's pretty niece that the scales fell from her eyes. Poor Sally! she had been really in love, and the shock was great; from that moment no epithet appeared to her too bad to apply to each and every member of the male sex, and she firmly persuaded herself that Mr. Jonathan Saunders had trifled with her affections, and then deserted her.

About five years later her father sold his business to the said Jonathan, and retired into private life; but either from missing his daily occupation, or from some other cause, his health gave way, and, after about a year of failing powers and enfeebled mind, he died, leaving his daughter, a "strong-

minded" woman of thirty-one, with a little property of about fifty pounds a year. After her father's death, Miss Barker did not remain long in Elmton. The sight of pretty little Mrs. Jonathan Saunders had ever been as gall and wormwood to her; but such was more particularly the case when that lady had been installed in the shop in the High Street, over the domestic arrangements of which she had herself so long reigned paramount.

Perhaps Mrs. Saunders had not been conciliatory; indeed, an amiable common friend had repeated to Miss Barker that, one of her speeches denunciatory of the male sex having been retailed to Mrs. Saunders, that lady had tossed her pretty head and made some pointed observations respecting sour grapes. But this was not the only reason for her leaving Elmton. Independent and without a tie in the world, she at once turned her thoughts to her early project of visiting America, and within a month of her father's death she sailed from Liverpool on her way to New York.

Of her proceedings in that city no very clear idea was ever obtained; rumors occasionally reached Elmton that she had become a medical practitioner, and styled herself Dr. Barker; that she had joined the most advanced section of the supporters of the Women's Rights movement; that she had become a "Bloomer," and that she had made a reputation as an energetic lecturer in the Female Suffrage interest in the States. But these rumors were few and far between, and had died away and been well-nigh forgotten, when, about a year before the time of which we write, the subject of them suddenly reappeared in Elmton, took a vacant set of rooms in the High Street, put a brass plate on the door, inscribed "*Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker*," sent circulars to all the principal inhabitants, and awaited patients. Some few she obtained; those who had known her in former days coming from curiosity to "see how Sally Barker looked as a doctor;" others in the belief that the charges of a female practitioner must necessarily be smaller than those of a male physician, in which they were speedily undeceived.

Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker had returned from America as keen and sharp-witted a female as is often to be met with, possessed of a great eye to the main chance, and a cool determination that her own slender resources should be supplemented

by those of her wealthier neighbors. In appearance those who came from curiosity found her but little altered, though they were considerably startled by the close-cut hair, parted on one side like a man's, and by the shirt-front, waistcoat, and shooting-coat in which the doctor was arrayed.

With a tolerably accurate knowledge of what could and could not be attempted with impunity, Dr. Barker stopped short at these articles of masculine attire, and clothed her nether woman in a plain cloth skirt, reaching to the ankles, and Wellington boots. She affected considerable Americanism of speech and manner, and had cultivated her natural abruptness of address till the result was somewhat startling. The financial results of her medical practice could hardly have been satisfactory, but it very soon became apparent that Dr. Barker had a second string to her bow.

One day another lady appeared on the scene, and was mentioned by Dr. Barker to all whom she met as "Sophonisba Jinks, the A 1 female lecturer of the U-nited States." Miss Sophonisba was a very great contrast to her friend. Young, fair, and rather good-looking, with large, wondering blue eyes, and an expression of innocence and helplessness, she was the last person that any one would have expected to find in the ranks, not to say in the van, of the strong-minded. And appearances were not so very deceptive; a more weak-minded, vacillating, helpless creature than Sophonisba Jinks it would have been hard to find, or one who in her innermost heart hankered more after the vanities, amusements, and frivolities of her sex. But she had a most wonderful gift of eloquence, and this had caused her to be seized upon as a prize by those who knew well how to turn her talent to their own account, and to prevent her, helpless as she was, from escaping from their clutches.

Allowed to talk to any one unrestrained, Sophonisba was capable in five minutes of deserting her colors, and of showing herself as frivolous, as girlish, and as half-hearted in the cause as was really the case; but when once on a platform confronting an audience, and conscious of what was expected of her, she rose to the occasion, and poured forth an unhesitating stream of specious and brilliant reasoning. She could also be trusted to do the best for the cause with her pen; once given the cue, she could write short and telling pamphlets, excellent addresses, and alluring advertisements. It was only

in private life that she failed, and in private life those interested in the success of the society took tolerably good care she should not be seen.

At Elmton she was under the especial charge of Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker, and as she was well endowed with the worldly goods which the doctor lacked, the latter kept vigilant watch over her, and guarded her jealously from all chances of indiscretion.

Immediately on Miss Sophonisba's arrival, the first steps were taken towards the institution of the Society for the Emancipation of Woman by the issue of a short pamphlet, written in her best manner, which was sent to every woman of the upper and middle classes in the town, setting forth the iniquity of the present subjugation of the sex, the injustice of the laws respecting the property of women, the degradation to which the usages of society compelled them to submit in abandoning their own name on marriage, and many other cognate topics. At the same time, lectures on the subject were announced to take place in the Town-hall, the lecturers to be "Miss Sophonisba Jinks, Champion Lecturer of the Women's Emancipation Society of New York and the United States," and "Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker, M.D., late President of the Women's Rights Association of Denver."

A country town, even if it be a manufacturing one, is often somewhat destitute of topics of conversation, and, Elmton being no exception to the rule, these pamphlets and announced lectures were a positive godsend to the idler portion of the population. The pamphlet was short, and the novelty of its being written by a woman induced many women to peruse it whose reading was habitually of anything rather than an intellectual type. Its language was forcible and persuasive, and women were adroitly flattered by comparisons between male and female powers and intellects—of course to the immense glorification of the latter—into believing themselves infinitely the superiors of their fathers, husbands, and brothers.

It was a pleasing doctrine, and took root apace; the sneers of the male members of the community, and their demonstrations of the futility of the arguments and the absurdity of the deductions therefrom, were received as testimonies to their disturbance and alarm at the truth having at length been brought home to the minds of their female belongings, and

feminine Elmton rushed almost *en masse* to the first lecture. It was somewhat of a shock to find Miss Sophonisba in plain and severe Bloomer costume, which, truth to tell, was as sore a mortification to the spirit of its wearer (who would fain have attired herself in silks and satins, frills and furbelows), as it was a disappointment to those who had hoped, in the intervals of being enlightened as to their social and political wrongs, to study the cut of the lecturer's tunic, or to learn some novel mode of arranging their hair.

But, despite this disappointment, Miss Sophonisba, as was her wont, as soon as she began to speak, carried the whole of her audience with her. Staid and respectable matrons, who had jogged through life very contentedly, only relieving the monotony of their placid existence by an occasional grumble, awoke suddenly to the fact that they were no better than slaves; that their quiet, steady-going husbands were unconscionable tyrants, and that the urgent and only possible remedy for this grievous state of things was that they should one and all be instantly entitled to a vote, and be eligible, not only for election to Parliament, but for every office and employment at present filled exclusively and unworthily by the male sex.

Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker did not attempt either to supplement or to emulate her colleague. At the conclusion of Miss Sophonisba's brilliant harangue she rose to state facts and to enter into business details. She began by hoping that the vehement applause accorded to the lecturer signified that there were many present who felt their wrongs, and were willing to join the cause, and to aid in emancipating not only themselves, but all their suffering sisters in the United Kingdom, from the ignominious thraldom in which they were held by the tyranny of man; and went on to state that it was proposed at once to form an association, to be called the "Elmton Society for the Emancipation of Women," in connection with the head office in London; that ladies were urged to join the society, which involved a subscription of only five shillings monthly; and also to allow their names to be placed on the committee, when the subscription would be ten shillings, with an immediate donation of one pound, to allow of suitable premises being engaged; that a most eligible suite of rooms had been seen on the ground-floor of No. 20, Wheeler Street, and would be at once secured, should sufficient funds be

forthcoming; that all subscriptions were to be payable in advance, and that she was now ready to receive both the money and the names of those who wished to join the society and advance the good cause.

There was some little hesitation when Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker concluded her speech, and seated herself at a table, on which were a large inkstand, two formidable-looking ledgers, and a money-box. No one liked to make the first move, and there was an immense deal of whispering and giggling. At length, however, the patience of Miss Martha Tibbs, a maiden lady of a certain age, was exhausted, and rising abruptly, she marched towards the platform. It must certainly have been compassion for the sufferings of others that was the mainspring of Miss Tibbs's action, for she was herself totally free from the present possession, and, to all appearance, from the future fear, of a "tyrant."

"On the committee, if you please," she said, as she tendered the requisite coins. "Common sense is always valuable in such matters, and my time shall be at your disposal."

Miss Tibbs having broken the ice, the rest of the audience almost all followed like sheep, seventy inscribing themselves as members of the committee, and receiving a small ivory badge, with "Committee, S. E. W., Elmton," inscribed thereon, two hundred and fifty becoming members, and receiving green cards, with "Member, S. E. W., Elmton," printed on them in large letters.

"Not bad for a first start," said S. J. Barker, as she counted the money, after she and Sophonisba had discussed a toothsome supper on their return home. "One hundred and sixty-seven pounds and ten shillings to start with, and ninety-seven pounds and ten shillings coming in in monthly subscriptions. Not bad while it lasts."

"But it never does," said Sophonisba.

These companions were by no means new to the art of setting such associations on foot.

"We shall see. We have never tried the game in this country yet. It is new here, whereas it is pretty well played out in the States. I calculate we may keep on here for a year or more, and then we can move on to some other town."

The ground-floor rooms of 20, Wheeler Street, were at once engaged, the gold-lettered blinds and brass bell-plate ordered,

and a meeting of the committee, with Miss Tibbs at their head, convened. The half-educated women (principally tradesmen's and small mill-owners' wives) who composed it, had not the very faintest notion of what they wanted, or of what they were expected to do; but they had a vague idea that they were doing something very spirited, independent, and clever, and felt immensely important when they refused an invitation to tea, on the ground that it was their "committee night."

Naturally such materials were as wax in the experienced hands of Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker and Miss Sophonisba Jinks, and the former was unanimously voted to the post of treasurer, the latter to that of secretary.

For some months all went well with the society—or rather with the two leading spirits thereof. The subscriptions were paid with commendable regularity, and the committee were kept fully satisfied by being required to deliberate at their monthly meetings on the answer to be returned to some sister society (which was, of course, mythical, having been composed by Miss Sophonisba), to audit accounts carefully prepared in her own interest by Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker, and to propose the sending out of fresh circulars, headed by the names of all the committee. This was, perhaps, the favorite employment; it seemed a perfectly never-ending pleasure to most of the members to see their names in print, and they appeared to think it amply repaid them for their monthly subscriptions. Lectures were occasionally given, sometimes introducing a lecturer from a distance, a friend of Miss Sophonisba, who delighted her audience by talking of the "action of Elmton" as an "immense assistance to the cause," and congratulating that town on being "known far and wide as leading the van of progress" in the emancipation of the women of England—all which greatly delighted her listeners, who understood about as much of progress as they did of parabolism.

But even the delight of thinking that "the eyes of England" (to use a favorite phrase of Miss Sophonisba's) "were directed on Elmton"—or rather, as each member of the committee secretly believed, on her individual self—began at length to pall. With a truly commendable amount of good sense and foresight, the men of the town had, as a rule, determined te let the women have their own way, convinced that thus the absurdity would die out all the sooner. They had occasionally

laughed at their wives, it is true, and grumbled when their suppers were neglected on a committee night; but they had done no more, and this absence of opposition was an unspoken but terrible mortification to the so-called "strong-minded." It began very gradually to dawn upon them that the monthly subscriptions, exacted with such unflinching regularity, were an immediate and tangible loss, necessitating certain privations in the matter of bonnets and ribbons; while at present, so far as they could see, there was no change whatsoever in their condition. It was true that they had signed a petition to Parliament, and had seen in the paper that it had been actually presented by the member for the borough—which for a time had made them feel that they were in some measure embarked upon the troubled sea of public life; but this had worn off, and even the proud consciousness of living under "the eyes of England" began, after a time, to lose its zest. The attendance at the committee meetings began visibly to slacken, the subscriptions became less regular; and Dr. Barker, accustomed to such premonitory symptoms of weariness, at once took alarm.

Another antagonistic cause, too, had been at work. Dr. Barker had been seriously unwell for several days, and unable to keep Sophonisba constantly in sight, as was her wont; and that young person had taken advantage of her unusual liberty to disport herself in ways most unbecoming the championess of Female Emancipation. Free from supervision, she had allowed herself to chatter in the most damaging and distracting manner, and had so grievously mismanaged the committee meeting over which she had been called to preside, that for the first time there was a considerable want of harmony, and several of the members intimated in indignant tones their intention of not attending again.

Then, procuring a ball-dress from Miss Deakin, the milliner who occupied the first floor of 20, Wheeler Street, she had attended a ball in the town-hall, her American training preventing her from seeing any reason against her doing so in the fact that she was unprovided with a chaperon.

Perhaps this was more disastrous than anything else. We have already said that Sophonisba was fair and decidedly pretty; she had also the advantage of novelty, and of being an excellent dancer, and the consequence was that she had no lack of partners, who all pronounced her "an out-and-out

jolly girl." High praise, truly; but hardly suitable to any one in so exalted a position as that of secretary to the Society for the Emancipation of Women!

There was no end to the troubles resulting from that evening's festivity. Mothers who saw their daughters supplanted by the peccant secretary, were little inclined to be merciful in their view of her conduct, and hinted pretty freely that a girl who would go alone to a public ball could be "no better than she should be."

Altogether, when Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker was sufficiently recovered to leave her room, she was aghast at the mischief wrought by her subordinate during her temporary retirement. It was evident that something must be done, and that quickly, if any hold were to be retained over the recalcitrant members, and the society to be rescued from utter shipwreck.

Dr. Barker proved herself equal to the occasion. She had frequently come in contact with several of the paid agitators who abounded in the town, and who were inclined to look on her proceedings with favor, as tending, however remotely, to the disruption of society. From them she had frequently heard of Christian Ettrick, and was aware, not only of the false steps she had taken with respect to her property, but of her openly-expressed views respecting female suffrage.

Here she saw a grand opportunity. If only Miss Ettrick could be persuaded to receive a deputation, if she could but be induced to accord her countenance to the society, to allow her name to appear as one of the committee, and to attend one or two of the meetings, the prestige of the association would at once revive. It would be an unspeakable delight to the whole society, who were by no means exclusively, or indeed mainly, recruited from the "upper ten" of even such a place as Elmton, to find themselves in the same room, and, for the time being, on an equality with a real "county lady," the proprietor of one of the finest places in Elmshire; it would revive the flagging interest, and probably bring the society many fresh members.

Dr. Barker knew all this well, being thoroughly acquainted with the proclivities and habits of thought of her town's-folk. Miss Sophonisba's transatlantic training prevented her comprehending why a Miss Ettrick should be superior to Miss Jinks, or to any one else. "If it had been a lady in her own

right, now," she began; but Dr. Barker, whose temper had by no means recovered from the shock of finding that the instant her back was turned her colleague had contrived to do such a vast amount of mischief, sharply bid her hold her tongue, and not make a fool of herself, but write out at once a suitable letter, begging Miss Ettrick to appoint a day for receiving a deputation from the Elmton Society for the Emancipation of Women, it having been brought to the notice of the said society that she was considerably interested in the cause.

Miss Sophonisba looked sulky, but obeyed; and Dr. Barker, reading the letter carefully over, pronounced that it would do, and it, some circulars, and a copy of the rules of the society were duly posted. Two days passed without an answer, but, on the day when we first make acquaintance with the treasurer and secretary, Christian's reply had been received, expressing her willingness to receive the deputation, and naming the first of November, then about a fortnight off, as the day most suitable to her. Since the receipt of the letter, Miss Sophonisba had been hard at work, sending out summonses for an extraordinary meeting of the committee on important business.

"Let's go a good number," she said, when, the task concluded, she subsided into the rocking-chair opposite to her colleague. "How many shall we go?—do say!"

"Ten," said Dr. Barker, snappishly.

"Ten!—is that all?"

"Yes, and enough too. If we were more, how could I be sure of keeping close to you, and stopping you from jawing?"

"Well, you needn't be so cross," said Sophonisba, melting into tears.

"Well, I am—it's enough to make any one mad at you. This is out-and-out the best draw we've ever had—over a thousand paid, and only three hundred pounds expenses, all told; and then, as soon as my back's turned, you must needs go and kick the pail over like an old cow—it's disgusting!" and Dr. Barker gave an emphatic stamp.

"Well, it'll be all right now with this Miss Ettrick," sobbed Sophonisba.

"I hope it may be," was the grim answer; "but even if it is, it'll be no thanks to you. I wish I knew how much she'd be good for at first!"

Poor Christian! if she could but have been behind the scenes!

CHAPTER XIX.

"I am not merry; but I do beguile
The thing I am by seeming otherwise."
Othello.

It must not be supposed that Lindsay's peremptory refusal to return to Ettrick, and Hyacinth's consequent discovery that he could be cross and selfish, and was, therefore, by no means so perfect as she had fondly believed him to be, had entirely spoiled the pleasure of her honeymoon. It is true that she thought much of Ettrick and of Christian, and that, whenever she did think of them, tears would rise unbidden to her eyes, partly at the thought of the loving father she should never see again, partly with longing to weep with and comfort the sister, who must, she felt, be so terribly lonely. Still, as the days passed by, and Christian's frequent letters made no mention of dislike of her solitude, she became gradually more reconciled, and began once more to take pleasure in what was passing around her.

Lindsay was much relieved to find that she offered no opposition to his wishes, and congratulated himself much on his wisdom in having settled matters with a high hand, and made it plain that his will was law. "It was always the best way with women." What man does not implicitly believe that he knows better than any one else in the world how to manage women? Lindsay was no exception to the rule, and was naturally neither more nor less ignorant than his fellows.

They moved slowly on from Venice to Florence, along the Corniche to Cannes, and then on to Paris. Under other circumstances, Paris would have been a real delight to Hyacinth; now, she was counting the hours that must elapse before she could throw herself into Christian's arms. The nearer she drew, the harder it seemed not to give utterance to the longing that grew daily stronger; but Lindsay was evidently enjoying Paris—she would not utter a word that could mar his enjoyment.

We do not mean to convey that Hyacinth was always in this frame of mind; very frequently, indeed, her buoyant

youth would assert itself, and she would be as gay and cheerful as was her wont. Having seen so little in her life, and having only been to the play twice, the theatres were a never-ending source of delight to her, in which Lindsay thoroughly concurred. But still it was with a feeling of irrepressible delight that she rose on the morning of their departure, and felt that she was at length really on her way to Christian. She did not wish to make this more apparent to Lindsay than she could possibly help; she thought that, seeing how delighted she was that the time had at length arrived, he would reproach himself for having postponed it unnecessarily, and she would have done anything rather than give him pain.

She need not, had she but known it, have had any fears of self-reproach on Lindsay's part; he perceived her state of joyful expectation, but far from any idea of blaming himself entering his mind, he felt irritated and aggrieved at her evident delight, persuading himself that what pleased him ought to have been amply sufficient for her. If the visit to Ettrick had not been eminently convenient to him at that moment, it is more than probable that he would, even at the eleventh hour, have made some excuse to postpone it; as it was, he contented himself by being cross and sulky to a degree quite new to his wife. However, she had naturally a sweet though a very warm temper, and Lindsay was so precious to her that she declined to believe that all his manifestations of bad humor could really proceed from that cause alone, tormenting herself during the whole journey with fears that he must be ill, and taking little precautions for his comfort and convenience, which ought to have mollified, but in his present mood rather exasperated him.

His creed was that a woman, when she married, should be so grateful to Providence for its bounty in giving her the supreme blessing of a husband that she should at once be ready to abandon all care for her own kith and kin, and be perfectly satisfied to minister to his wishes, and hang reverentially upon his words. He had felt somewhat aggrieved even at the tears Hyacinth had shed for her father; he thought that, possessing him, she should have neither wished for nor required more.

Naturally, therefore, it was provoking to him to find that the fact that it had been his sovereign will and pleasure to

remain abroad had not been sufficient to dispose of his wife's wish to return home, and he arrived at Ettrick in as unamiable a humor as could well be imagined.

"Where is Ronald?" said Hyacinth, after dinner, as she sat with Scamp curled up in ecstatic happiness on her lap, and Sailor extended at her feet; "you have never mentioned him, and I asked in every letter."

"Didn't I?" said Christian, with an affectation of indifference; "poor old Ronald, he is dead! we buried him under the beech-tree in the Hyacinth Dell."

"Dead! and you never told me! When was it? and how?"

"We found him dead one evening, stretched out as if he were asleep," said Christian, who was determined not to tell her sister that the melancholy event had occurred on her wedding-day, and at her own door; "you know he was very old."

"Yes; a good riddance," said Sir Lindsay; "if that brute"—pointing to Sailor—"were to go too, it would be a good thing."

His tone was so cross and snappish that Christian could not suppress a look of surprise; seeing which, Hyacinth checked the warm words of defense of her old favorite that had risen to her lips. But turn the conversation to what topic they might, Lindsay had some disagreeable remark to make upon it, and both sisters were glad when the evening was over.

"My poor Hyacinth!" was Christian's reflection, as she mused that night in her own room, "how unworthy he is of her, and how sweetly she bears all his ill-temper! Well, how women can be found to put themselves in the power of a man for better for worse, passes my comprehension. Love must be a far stronger power than I imagine, if it ever takes such possession of my senses as to make me even conceive such a thing possible!"

Hyacinth slept but little that night. She was intensely excited at the return to her old home, and by all the associations connected with her father, which renewed her grief for his loss; it was an exquisite pleasure to find herself once more with Christian, the hitherto inseparable companion of her whole life. But all these things were as nothing to the fact

that Lindsay, her precious, peerless Lindsay, had been cross, unkind, and almost rude to her for a whole day! She wondered much what was the matter, and racked her brain to conceive any cause of annoyance or offense which she had given him, but in vain. Naturally the reason of his ill-humor never dawned upon her; she would hardly have believed, had she been told, that he objected to her rejoicing at seeing once more her old home and her twin sister; still, with a rare discretion, she abstained from asking him what was the matter, and even feigned not to observe anything unusual.

In this she acted wisely, for Lindsay would have been much offended at having his ill-humor remarked upon, more especially by his wife, who was in duty bound to think him perfect, whatever he might choose either to do or say.

Thanks to a good night's rest, and to his *amour-propre* having been left undisturbed, he rose the next morning in a better humor, and Christian was relieved to find that her sister had not incessant crossness and ill-temper to endure. There was, of course, a good deal of business to be transacted, which had been awaiting Sir Lindsay's return, and after breakfast the family lawyer, who had traveled by the early train from London, made his appearance, and they retired together to the library.

For the first time the sisters were left alone; and then Hyacinth, with many tears, heard all that Christian had to tell of their father's death.

"And you do not feel very lonely?" she said, when they at length passed on to other matters. "I should so like you to come and live with us!"

"So would not Lindsay, I imagine," thought Christian; but she only said, "Lonely! My dear Bluebell, I am far too busy. If you only knew all the business I have to get through!"

"And Aunt Marion wanted to stay with you for a little?"

"No; to live with me as a chaperon."

"And you would not have her? Well, I'm not a bit surprised; I shouldn't have liked it myself, if I had been in your place. But Lindsay said you were very wrong—that it would have been the very best thing in the world, and that it was a great mistake your refusing."

"I don't agree with him," said Christian, placidly.

"Well—but I suppose it is odd your having no chaperon."

"Then it must continue odd. I can take very good care of myself, and don't mean to make myself uncomfortable for the sake of conventionality."

"You are just the same Christian as ever," said Hyacinth, laughing. "How I should hate living here all alone! I couldn't do it. Oh! Christian, it seems such a different world, now that I have my dear Lindsay!"

Not appreciating Lindsay, feeling extremely wrathful at the manner in which he had spoken to her sister the night before, and generally mistrusting the whole race of men, Christian had nothing to reply to what seemed to her a piece of gross infatuation, and changed the subject by proposing a visit to the stables, where Bay Charmer delighted her mistress by recognizing her with a whinny of welcome.

"You dear thing!" said Hyacinth, kissing her glossy neck, "how nice of you to know me again! What fun we will have together at Knotlem!"

"*Apropos* of hunting," said Christian, as they left the stables and strolled towards the Hyacinth Dell, "do explain something which has puzzled me immensely. When we were putting your room to rights, after your departure, in one of the drawers we found a mounted fox's brush. How did you ever become possessed of such a thing?"

"I don't mind telling you now; there is no one to be vexed about it, and Lindsay knows," answered Hyacinth; and she detailed the history of her hunting escapade, with which our readers are already familiar.

But after having related it she became very grave and silent. She had never once thought of Wilfred Lambert since her wedding-day—she might almost be said to have forgotten his existence; and now he was recalled to her under the beech-tree in the Glen—the very spot where he had bid her farewell—the place where she had last thought of him on the eve of her wedding-day—the spot that was now poor old Ronald's grave. A species of shiver—a sort of anticipation of future sorrow—passed over her. She negatived, somewhat hastily, Christian's proposition to take the boat out for half an hour, on the plea of fatigue, and they walked slowly back to the house.

"The sixteenth of May—I shall not fail," were words that

kept ringing in her ears, sounding like a whisper of evil omen. What nonsense! she told herself, angrily. She had promised—had, indeed, said nothing. Mr. Lambert had asserted his intention of returning on that day to ask her to be his wife, if she were still unmarried; but he had done so in the belief which she then shared—that Lindsay loved Christian. Doubtless, long ere this, the tidings of her marriage had shown him how mistaken he had been, and he had probably forgotten her.

But, as she told herself this, a sort of presentiment of coming ill still hung about her, and she strove in vain to banish Wilfred Lambert from her mind.

"I say, Hyacinth," said Lindsay, that afternoon, as they rode together in the direction of Brymer Oaks, Bay Charmer prancing, curveting, and showing herself off in every possible way, "you told me about your father's giving you and Christian the diamonds you wore that night at the ball. Do you know, it turns out that those he gave her are heirlooms, and belong to the title; he had no right to give them at all?"

"But Christian has the estate. Don't the heirlooms go with that?" asked Hyacinth, whose views of inheritance, property, and all other legal matters, were decidedly hazy.

"Not with this estate, which was your father's to leave. They belong to Glen Ettrick. He must have forgotten that when he gave them to Christian."

"Well, it doesn't signify. I am sure I've got plenty."

"My dear Hyacinth, you must have the heirlooms, of course. It's a case of positive right."

"But I couldn't take them from Christian. It's impossible. Papa gave them to her."

"Which, as I have just tried to explain to you, he had not the smallest right to do. Don't be childish, Hyacinth. The diamonds are mine, not Christian's, and I shall of course claim them. It would be wrong not to do so."

"It seems hard," said Hyacinth; "but I am sure, Lindsay, you know best. Of course I can give Christian my diamonds instead, and she is clever, and will understand about heirlooms, and not mind."

"I can't help her minding or not, I certainly shall claim my own property. But pray don't let me hear any more of such nonsense as your giving up yours. Your father gave them to you, and I insist on your keeping them."

"But, Lindsay, just think! It is so unfair that I should have all, and she nothing, particularly as she is the eldest."

"I don't know what you mean by having all. She has the estate, and eight thousand pounds a year, which is more by a good deal than you have."

"But, Lindsay——"

"But, Hyacinth, don't talk any more nonsense. The diamonds Christian has are mine, and I forbid you to part with yours. I wonder you shouldn't care more for your father's gift!"

Hyacinth said no more, but the pleasure of her ride was gone, not even a brisk gallop across country having the power to raise her spirits. She could not and would not allow that Lindsay could possibly be wrong, still it jarred her feelings, and offended her notions of fairness, to deprive Christian of her diamonds and to give nothing in return.

She went straight to her sister's room when she got home, and told her all Lindsay had said. Christian laughed, more especially at Lindsay's reproach to his wife for not caring sufficiently for her father's gift. She shrewdly suspected, what was indeed the case, that the value of the diamonds far outweighed any sentiment in his mind. She guessed that her father had given her the ancestral gems in the belief that she would marry her cousin, and that therefore they only came into her possession a little before their time. But her first thought was to reassure Hyacinth.

"You silly Bluebell, to fancy I care one bit for jewels! Of course Lindsay is quite right, and heirlooms do go with the title. I shall be very glad to be relieved of the custody of them. And as for yours, you don't fancy I would have taken them, though it was very dear of you to want to give them to me. They are infinitely more in your line than mine."

"It is very good of you not to mind," said Hyacinth, doubtfully.

"Mind! You foolish child, did you ever know me wear even the bracelets and rings I have, when I could by any possibility help it?"

And Hyacinth, being forced to acknowledge she had not, felt somewhat comforted. Christian brought down the diamonds, and gave them to Lindsay that evening after dinner.

"It is rather a relief to me to get rid of them," she said.

"You could hardly find any one to whom they are of less use, or who cares for them so little."

When Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick took their departure for Knotlem, in the course of the ensuing week, they left Christian much puzzled as to her own feelings respecting them. Hyacinth professed herself enthusiastically happy, and Christian tried to hope that she really was so; but she could not realize how any one, who, to her eyes, was so egregiously selfish as Lindsay, could possibly inspire such a passion. The imaginative faculty was not strong in her, and she was far from possessing her sister's power of idealization. Then she was conscious that she could not quite understand him; it was surely impossible that, married to any one so loving and so lovable as was Hyacinth, he could be indifferent to her, yet certainly his manner of speaking either to or of her was far less deferential than she, in her devotion to her sister, deemed fitting. However, she tried to dismiss her uneasiness as to Hyacinth's future happiness, by the reflection that she knew nothing whatever of love and lovers, and the hope that it was her ignorance rather than his affection that was in fault.

Meanwhile Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick were settling down in their hunting-quarters at Knotlem. It was a very tiny little house, almost in the town, but it was the only one to be had possessed of adequate stabling—naturally of even greater importance to a hunting man than his own accommodation. Hyacinth's taste soon converted the common, dingy-looking little drawing-room into a pretty and unique boudoir. The walls were fortunately inoffensive, somewhat a rare occurrence in houses of an inferior class; and so with cretonne curtains and furniture of small oriental pattern, some luxurious chairs, not to be found in the "inventory" of Knotlem Lodge, Turkish and Persian rugs liberally dispersed over the floor to hide the threadbare crimson carpet, sundry red velvet brackets for effective though not particularly valuable Indian china, and a lavish display of Hyacinth's wedding presents and other pet nicknacks, the room looked not only pretty, but thoroughly homelike and comfortable.

It was a disappointment to Hyacinth to find that there was not a single spare room, thus rendering it impossible for her to have Christian to stay with her; but she felt comforted for

this when Lindsay showed her a letter from his mother, offering to pay them a long visit; it was, she felt, a great relief to be able to say truly that it was utterly impossible.

Hyacinth was by no means attached to her mother-in-law. As we have seen, she had disagreeable reminiscences of her, dating far back in her childhood, and these had been by no means effaced during Mrs. Ettrick's stay at the Hall. She had contrived to make many very unpleasant speeches, which Hyacinth keenly resented and accurately remembered, and had not been specially gracious in welcoming her as her daughter-in-law. Knowing nothing of the way in which Lindsay had been assigned to Christian, Hyacinth naturally ascribed this coldness to dislike of herself, and returned her mother-in-law's assumed aversion with interest. It was therefore no small relief to know that to receive her as an inmate at Knotlem was absolutely impossible; besides, Hyacinth felt that it would have tied her terribly: she could hardly have left Mrs. Ettrick alone day after day, and yet she had set her heart on hunting three days a week, and driving Lindsay to covert in her pretty pony phaeton on any other days that he might go out.

So she felt she could not regret the smallness of the house so much as she might otherwise have done, and comforted herself by looking forward to London, where she might have Christian with her.

The first meet of the season was at Dempston Gorse, about six miles from Knotlem; and Hyacinth, as she drove her black ponies to the meet, felt a considerable excitement at the prospect of her first day's real hunting. Bay Charmer and Lindsay's handsome gray, Romeo, were objects of considerable attention, and many admiring glances were cast on Hyacinth as she rode by her husband's side on her lovely mare.

Lindsay was fully aware of these glances, and enjoyed them thoroughly. He liked other people to admire his possession and approve his taste. At that moment he felt prouder and more elated than he had done since his wedding-day. He soon found many friends among the throng, and was at once besieged with entreaties for introductions to his wife.

Hyacinth was totally unaware of the admiration she excited, ascribing the many glances turned upon her to Bay Charmer's perfections; but being of an extremely sociable disposition, and having hitherto had but slight opportunity of indulging

it, she felt considerably elated at the number of acquaintances who crowded around her.

Lindsay watched with pride and pleasure the sensation she created—it was a pleasing tribute to his taste and judgment, and put him on excellent terms with himself. There was but little time, however, for indulgence in social amenities, for the find was almost immediate, and, gathering up their reins, Lindsay and Hyacinth were soon sailing together over the level pastures. It was a different sort of country from Elmshire, and the first two or three fences looked very formidable to Hyacinth's unaccustomed eyes; but finding Bay Charmer seemed perfectly at home, and cleared all obstacles with unvarying precision, she was speedily at her ease, and enjoying herself fully as much as she expected to do.

It was a very fast run, with a kill in the open, and she had, to her immense delight, the glory of being presented with the brush, as the only lady up. But, *surgit amari aliquid*, it brought memories she would gladly have avoided. As they turned to ride home, in company with many of the field whose way was the same as theirs, Lindsay was suddenly greeted by a very handsome young woman on a showy chestnut.

"Lindsay Ettrick, by all that's wonderful! Well met, Lindsay! Where have you dropped from?"

Hyacinth was considerably amazed at the familiarity of this greeting, but even more surprised to see her husband change color and look much discomfited. However, he recovered himself speedily, responded to the greeting, and continued,—

"Let me introduce you to Lady Ettrick. Hyacinth, my dear, Mrs. Marsfield."

Hyacinth, looking at her new acquaintance, took an instinctive dislike to the bold though handsome black eyes that were fixed upon her, which feeling was not lessened by the cool way in which their owner proceeded to appropriate Lindsay during the ride home. Certainly Hyacinth could not complain of being neglected, for she had any number of cavaliers ready and willing to amuse and entertain her; but nothing could make up to her for the loss of Lindsay's society, and she looked with anything but charitable feelings at the superb figure on the showy chestnut in front of her.

"Good-by, my dear Lady Ettrick," said Mrs. Marsfield, carelessly, as she and Lindsay, who were leading the way,

paused at a cross-road, where their respective routes diverged. "I'll come over and see you in a day or two. Your husband and I are such old friends; I hope we shall often see you at Marsfield. Sir Harry, are you coming my way? We had better trot on, I felt a drop of rain."

Hyacinth did not feel at all desirous of the promised visit. Something in Mrs. Marsfield's manner jarred her; besides, she was indignant at her calm appropriation of Lindsay. She was dying to ask questions about her, but various people, living either in the town or beyond it, accompanied them to their very door, and she had no opportunity until they were seated quietly in the drawing-room after dinner, when she commenced her inquiries.

"Laura Marsfield?" said Lindsay, sleepily, from the depths of his luxurious arm-chair. "Oh! she's capital fun. Not the style one would care for in one's wife or one's sister exactly, but not a bit of harm in her."

"She seemed to know you very well."

"Oh! that's her manner. But I did know her very well once, when we were quartered at Timborough. She was a manufacturer's daughter, with lots of money, and now she's married Marsfield, old Lord Cottington's only son, and they live with him at Marsfield, about three miles from this. It's sure to be a gay, pleasant house."

Hyacinth said nothing, but she experienced an uneasy and indefinable presentiment of future discomfort connected in some way with Mrs. Marsfield. Her feelings were not rendered more cordial when Mrs. Marsfield drove over two days later to pay her a visit. Lindsay had gone to a distant meet—too distant, it had been agreed, for the ponies, and she felt jealous when her visitor mentioned having been there and having seen her husband.

"He promised you would both dine with us to-morrow night," she continued, carelessly. "He and I are such old friends that I felt sure you would excuse a formal note—writing is such a bore."

"Oh! certainly. We shall be very happy," said Hyacinth, frigidly. She felt that she was growing more and more to dislike this woman, who seemed determined to take possession of her husband.

"You'll find this place gay and pleasant enough soon,"

continued her visitor; "people have hardly settled down yet. There are plenty of balls in the winter; we're going to give a fancy one at Marsfield. What will you be? I told Lindsay to-day he'd look best as somebody of Charles II.'s time."

"I have no doubt the dress would be becoming to Sir Lindsay," said Hyacinth, coldly, with a marked emphasis on the Sir; "for myself, I fear I must decline; my mourning is too deep for such a festivity."

"Oh! that's old-fashioned nonsense," returned Mrs. Marsfield. "I shall talk to your husband; it'll be too ridiculous to shut yourself up."

Hyacinth could not at all make out her husband's feelings towards Mrs. Marsfield; he called her fast and slang, and bad style, yet she seemed to do much as she pleased with him. It did not seem a case of fascination exactly; Hyacinth did not feel precisely jealous, still she was deeply hurt at the persistent manner in which her husband and Mrs. Marsfield always came together when they met, which was a matter of almost daily occurrence, both in the hunting-field and at the many dinners to which they were invited. She was left to her own devices on such occasions, and as she did not want for cavaliers, as she enjoyed very keenly all the amusements of which, as yet, she had scarcely tasted, as she was endowed with high not to say wild spirits, which had never been modified and restrained by intercourse with the world, and as she was piqued at Lindsay's conduct, and yet desired above all things that neither he nor Mrs. Marsfield should see her annoyance, it was perhaps not very wonderful that after some six weeks had elapsed the mothers who saw their daughters eclipsed by, and neglected for, the piquante bride, and the dull, staid matrons, to whom no young men ever dreamed of talking, should have begun to shake their heads and say, "Poor Sir Lindsay! it was very sad—he was much to be pitied;" or that it should have been decided, in most circles in Knotlem and its vicinity, that "Lady Ettrick was decidedly fast."

CHAPTER XX.

"Women, up till this
Cramp'd under worse than South-Sea isle taboo,
Dwarfs of the gynæceum, fail so far
In high desire, they know not, cannot guess
How much their welfare is a passion to us.—
If we could give them surer, quicker proof:—
Oh! if our end were less achievable
By slow approaches than by single act
Of immolation, any phase of death,
We were as prompt to spring against the pikes,
Or down the fiery gulf, as talk of it,
To compass our dear sister's liberties."

The Princess.

CHRISTIAN rose, on the morning of the first of November, with the feeling that something very unusual and extremely important was about to occur. She would have been somewhat puzzled if she had been questioned as to what result she anticipated from this deputation of the Elmton Society for the Emancipation of Women; she was even quite in the dark as to what could possibly have induced them to offer to wait upon her; still she felt glad, it was surely a move in the right direction, and sure to bring her into immediate contact with those who were working in the cause of female advancement and social progress. She rather wondered what Laurence would say to the matter; he had predicted that acquaintance with any of those female leaders of the movement, whom he had profanely termed the "Shrieking Sisterhood," would surely end in her speedy disenchantment. She trusted such would not be the case, it would be so unspeakably humiliating to have to acknowledge that a man was in the right on such a subject.

Still, she felt an unaccountable longing to tell him what she was about to do, and to hear his opinion of the proceeding, and felt considerable disappointment at not encountering him, as she had hitherto so often done, in her solitary rides. She was unaware that he had gone to London for a fortnight on business, and wondered considerably as to what could have become of him. She was greatly surprised to find how much she missed these casual meetings; she had not the faintest

suspicion that her interest in Laurence had the least tenderness in it, and would have laughed to scorn, if she had not been unspeakably indignant at, the suggestion that she cared in the slightest degree whether she ever saw him again or not; but though she was perfectly unaware of it, such indifference was very far, indeed, from being real. She was conscious of caring for his approbation and good opinion more than she had ever hitherto done for that of any one she knew; but she believed that this was only because he had chosen to treat her as a reasonable being, and to argue with her as such, instead of paying her absurd compliments and laughing at her opinions and convictions; she little knew that she was but turning the first page of the old, old but ever new story of woman's life, that the care she felt respecting Laurence's opinion was but the dawning of love. Poor Christian! how angry she would have been with any one who had ventured to suggest such a solution of her feelings towards the handsome young artist, and how well it was that there was no one at hand to do so! Probably more happy and suitable marriages have been prevented by such innocently-intended banter of injudicious friends than by any other cause.

The station was about two miles from the house at Ettrick Hall, and Christian, uncertain as to the number of her intended visitors, dispatched both omnibus and break for their conveyance. She also ordered a sumptuous luncheon, almost sufficient in quantity to have regaled a regiment, and seated herself in the drawing-room, feeling considerable curiosity, and a certain amount of trepidation, at the prospect before her.

Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker had had her own way, as, indeed, was usually the case, and had strictly limited the number of the deputation to ten, selecting them from among the most enthusiastic champions of the cause. The length of time that Miss Sophonisba took in arraying herself struck her as suspicious, and, ascending to her apartment, she found that damsel attiring herself in a manner little becoming her position as secretary to a society whose chiefs only delayed their assumption of masculine attire in deference to the susceptibilities of its weaker members. The treasurer could with pleasure have shaken her frivolous colleague, but Sophonisba's talents were too valuable to render it expedient to proceed to such violent measures; besides, there was barely time for her

to lay aside her beloved flounces and furbelows, and attire herself once more in her ordinary dress.

"Where on earth did you get all that fiddle-faddle from?" asked Dr. Barker, as she superintended the hasty toilet of the sulky and sobbing Sophonisba; "from Miss Deakin, I'll be bound, where you got the ball-dress that did such a power of mischief. I declare I've a great mind to get her to move into these rooms, and take hers. I will, too. The High Street will be a better situation for her, and it will save us a great deal of trouble to live over the committee room, besides keeping you out of mischief. Now, then, come along. No! you can't stop to put away your fal-lals, it 'll be all we can do not to miss the train as it is,"—and driving the secretary before her, Dr. Barker left the house, and saved the train by less than a minute, reaching the station in a breathless condition, by no means conducive to the sweetening of her temper. Ashamed to be seen crying like a scolded child, Miss Sophonisba recovered her equanimity in a manner truly wonderful, and only possible to very weak and shallow natures; the excitement of the short journey amused her, and by the time they reached the Ettrick Hall station she was as cheerful as was her wont.

Great was the self-congratulation of the members of the deputation at the carriages sent to meet them. Mrs. Larkins, the wife of the largest mill-owner in Elmton, the only one of the party who was herself possessed of a carriage, felt her importance increased as she spread out the folds of her grass-green satin gown in the corner of the omnibus, and remarked condescendingly that "Miss Ettrick evidently knew how to do things in proper style." Mrs. Larkins was somewhat of a thorn in the flesh to Dr. Barker. She was quite willing to be emancipated, and considered herself the equal of any man, and considerably the superior of her shrewd, sensible husband, who laughed at her follies, and told her she was welcome to be as silly as she pleased, so long as she did not interfere with his business; but she was devoted to dress, and some dim idea that emancipation must bring her more money to spend upon it was at the bottom of her adhesion to the cause. She therefore turned a deaf ear to all the treasurer's remonstrances, and as she was a person of some weight in Elmton, and a considerable assistance in bringing smaller fish to the net, Dr. Bar-

ker feared to say too much, although Mrs. Larkins's splendor was greatly at variance with the principles of the society, as stated in Miss Sophonisba's eloquent pamphlets and speeches.

Miss Martha Tibbs formed one of the deputation, though she had for some time past been far from satisfied with the manner in which things were conducted. She was a shrewd old maid, with a keen eye to the main chance, and was sorely puzzled by the financial statements so glibly and so plausibly propounded by Dr. Barker. She had hinted her uneasiness more than once, and Dr. Barker would willingly have dispensed with the company of one so much too shrewd for her wishes, had she not feared that Miss Tibbs would be more powerful for mischief off the committee than on it. The remaining six members of the deputation were Mrs. Sloman, the wife of the radical butcher, a lady who in theory insisted that rank was a sheer flying in the face of Providence, who had made all men equal, but in practice could not refrain from a visit which would give her the opportunity of boasting that she had sat in the drawing-room of a member of one of the county families; of Mrs. Jonas, the wife of a small mill-owner, who, had she had the means, would have emulated and endeavored to outshine the magnificence of Mrs. Larkins, but who, in default thereof, went into the opposite extreme—wore a cloth costume even more severe in cut than that of Dr. Barker herself, and harangued all who would listen on the immense advantage that would accrue to society from the adoption by women of male attire; of Mrs. Maginn, the wife of the proprietor of the "Elmshire Arms," who had entire control and management of everything in the establishment, never permitting her meek spouse to open his lips save on rare occasions, that she might have the opportunity of snubbing him, yet who was louder in her jeremiads over the subjection of women and more enthusiastic for their emancipation, than were any of her colleagues; of Mrs. Gardon, the tailor's wife, who always agreed emphatically with the last speaker, whatever doctrine he or she might have propounded; and of Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Thomas, widows who were generally too bewildered by the utterances of the person who spoke last to open their mouths until the time for so doing was safely past.

Mrs. Gardon and Miss Sophonisba Dr. Barker deemed it wise to keep under her own eye, lest one should talk non-

sense, and the other, as was certain, agree to it. She also felt disinclined to lose sight of Miss Tibbs, whose views of the financial arrangements were best, she thought, unventilated. She therefore decreed that these ladies should accompany her in the break, while the other six were accommodated in the omnibus.

Arrived at the Hall, the two parties joined, and, headed by the old butler, who looked on the whole proceeding with sovereign contempt, and privately thought his young mistress must be out of her mind, proceeded along the corridor to the drawing-room, where Christian, now unmistakably nervous, awaited them. Dr. Barker advanced alone, as soon as the door was opened, and shook hands with Christian, who stood in the centre of the room, and looked—as indeed she felt—somewhat uncertain as to what was expected of her.

"Glad to see you, Miss Ettrick," said the treasurer, slightly increasing—as was her wont when speaking officially—the Americanism of her tone and manner. "I'm right away glad you consented to receive the deputation. We've often heard of you in Elmton as feeling with us."

"I'm sure I'm very glad," said Christian, blushing, hesitating, and very far from being at her ease. "It is very kind of you and of all these ladies."

"I'll just name them to you at once," interrupted Dr. Barker, "before the secretary reads the address. This"—with a wave of her hand—"is Miss Martha Tibbs, Mrs. Larkins, Mrs. Sloman, Mrs. Jonas, Mrs. Maginn, Mrs. Gardon, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Thomas, Miss Sophonisba Jinks, secretary to the society, and the A1 Female Lecturer of the U-nited States, and myself, Dr. S. Jeffreson Barker, treasurer and general manager of the society, so elected by universal acclamation."

As each name was mentioned Christian bowed, and her salutation was returned in ways very characteristic of the recipients. Miss Martha gave a slight and stiff curtsy, such as might have been executed by an ancient Dutch doll; Mrs. Larkins spread out her green satin skirts, and made a bow intended to be enormously patronizing; Mrs. Sloman, as the advanced radical of the party, was naturally overawed by the company in which she found herself, and made a curtsy rivaling in obsequiousness those which she exacted from her

own maids; Mrs. Jonas, true to her assumption of masculine manners, gave a sort of nod, accompanied by a jerk of the wide-awake she carried in her hand; Mrs. Maginn bowed, with a sweep of her hand much as if she were welcoming Christian as a customer at the "Elmshire Arms;" and Mrs. Gardon being named next, gave a humble imitation of her immediate predecessor, which had much the effect of a wren copying a peacock; while Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Thomas bobbed bewildered curtsies, and looked, as they felt, both uncomfortable and out of place.

"Read the address," commanded Dr. Barker; and Sophonisba, advancing, read, in her singularly musical voice, a carefully-prepared address, wherein many allusions were made to Christian's interest in the cause, her love of equality, as evidenced in the speech made by her to her tenants on coming of age, and her interest in the working-classes, as shown by her liberal conduct to her laborers.

We need hardly weary our readers with the usual tall talk and clap-trap by which female suffrage was made to appear a panacea for all ills, and was pointed to as the one cure for all difficulties, either in the social or the political world; incessant iteration by their wildly-excited votaries has long since rendered them a burden and vexation of spirit to most sensible people. Suffice it to say that the unavoidable topic was dwelt on at great length, and in Miss Sophonisba's best manner, and that Christian, enthusiastic as she was, found her most fervent dreams far exceeded by the secretary's eloquent foreshadowing of a rapidly-approaching female millennium.

Her answer was very short: she merely said that they had by no means over-estimated her interest in the cause, which was indeed one very near her heart; that she should be very happy to join the society, and assist it in any way that lay within her power and that might be pointed out to her.

This at once brought up Dr. Barker, who succinctly remarked that in this, as in every other cause, money was the one thing necessary—she might say the very sinews of war (an "Ah-h-h!" of admiration from Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Thomas, promptly imitated by Mrs. Gardon)—that the subscription to the committee was one pound on entrance, and ten shillings monthly, but that any donations bestowed over and above the prescribed sum were most thankfully received,

and at once invested for the benefit of the society (which statement was emphasized by a doubtful grunt from Miss Martha Tibbs), and presented the committee roll for Christian's signature.

Christian, having duly inscribed her name, and thanked them for having called on her, imagined the business was over, and proposed adjourning to the dining-room; but Dr. Barker had as yet by no means achieved all she wanted. She required Christian as a bait to arouse once more the waning interest of Elmton, and to enable her to realize a handsome sum before the final and, as she well knew, inevitable collapse of the society there took place. The hope of meeting Miss Ettrick of Ettrick Hall in the committee-room would, she knew, make committee-women of many who were now contented to be merely members and to pay five shillings monthly instead of ten; and if the young lady could but be induced to appear on the platform at one of the lectures, the town-hall would fill to overflowing, and the society recover a temporary prosperity. Her fingers were itching to open the envelope which Christian had handed to her, containing her subscription, but it would have been *infra dig.* to show her anxiety; besides, supposing the check to be a large one, Miss Martha Tibbs's prying eyes might see more than was either convenient or desirable.

"We thought it best to come but a small number to-day," she began, "but our committee is a large one, and will receive with great satisfaction the tidings that you have joined us. We have a meeting every Thursday night, 8.30 sharp. I hope we may see you sometimes."

"I shall be very glad. I will come next Thursday," said Christian, who was young and innocent enough really to believe that sitting on a committee must mean doing some positive and tangible work.

"Next week," pursued Dr. Barker, "a lecture is to be delivered in the town-hall by the secretary" (Sophonisba bridled, and looked conscious), "assisted, we hope, by a deputy from the sister society at Wooltown" (this sister society existed merely in Miss Sophonisba's circulars and the belief of the committee), "Eliza Washington Bang, Champion Female Lecturer of Kentucky. You will, of course, wish to be present, and to appear on the platform as one of us—it will have a most beneficial effect on the society."

"I can hardly think that," said Christian, with a smile.

"But it will, I assure you; county families have immense influence," said Dr. Barker, forgetting that universal equality formed a very prominent part of the programme of the society. "Why, if Lady Elmshire would come forward as you are doing, we should soon have the whole town, and county, too, with us."

"I cannot give you much hope of Lady Elmshire," said Christian, smiling as she thought of the marchioness's horror at the bare idea—"but now come in to luncheon."

It would have been an amusing study if the minds of the eleven women seated round that table could all have been laid bare. Christian, so young in the world's ways, and so guilelessly enthusiastic, believing implicitly all the exaggerated doctrines of which the Society for the Emancipation of Women professed itself the exponent; Dr. Barker, speculating as to the prospective money-value of her new recruit, and mentally arranging the method by which the crisp new five-pound note, which she had placed in her pocket on the chance, was to be inserted in the envelope containing Christian's check, if the latter, on inspection, proved to be of greater value; Miss Sophonisba enjoying the luxury of all around her, thinking regretfully of her forbidden finery, and hopefully of a certain occasion on which she meant, unknown to Dr. Barker, to enjoy it; Miss Tibbs wondering how, without an absolute rupture with the treasurer, she could convey to the assembled members of the committee her belief that Miss Ettrick's donation would be safer in her own pocket than in the official one; Mrs. Larkins somewhat dismayed at the extreme plainness of her hostess's dress, but comforted by the reflection that, after all, it was deep mourning, which did not afford much scope for display; and still more by being waited on by a butler and two tall footmen in livery, whose every movement she watched with furtive curiosity. The radical Mrs. Sloman was also much edified by these domestics, and invariably said "Thank you, sir," when a dish was offered to her. Mrs. Maginn's mind was given entirely to the *menu*, and to the possibility of reproducing, in the kitchen of the "Elmshire Arms," such dishes as specially struck her fancy, for the delectation of any particularly valuable customer. Mrs. Gardon, it not being possible to give a cue to her thoughts, as it was to her tongue,

was considering ruefully whether her lord and master, whose temper was far from an even one, would not be grievously displeased at her absenting herself from home for the entire day without having apprised him of the fact—which she had not dared to do, for fear of being summarily forbidden to join the deputation on which she had so set her heart,—and was doubting whether the pleasure enjoyed was worth the thrashing of which she was beginning to entertain a lively anticipation. Her spirits began to fall ominously, and she accepted every glass of wine proffered to her, in the hope of reviving her fast ebbing courage.

In this she was emulated by Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Thomas, who, although they had not her excuse of terror of a certain horsewhip possessed by Gardon, and frequently used by him for purposes of marital correction, could not resist temptation; and who, to Dr. Barker's indignation and dismay, were waxing decidedly noisy and argumentative, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and the butler announced—

"The Marchioness of Elmshire, Lord Elmton, and Mr. Courtray."

Christian was forcibly struck by the extreme absurdity of the situation—that Lady Elmshire, of all people in the world, should have chanced upon such a meeting!—and felt a prevision of the merry banter in which Lord Elmton would indulge, while she felt sure Laurence would express his satisfaction that she was making acquaintance with some of the "Shrieking Sisterhood," with a view to being disgusted by them.

She contrived, however, to maintain her composure, and welcomed her guests as if it were nothing unusual to have ten very singular-looking women assembled at her table. A chair was found for Lady Elmshire between Christian and Miss Tibbs, and that worthy spinster stared with such awe-struck intensity at her august neighbor that Dr. Barker saw her opportunity, opened the lightly-closed envelope in her pocket, removed the check, replacing it by the five-pound note—noting, as she did so, that she had netted ninety-five pounds by the exchange,—and reclosing the envelope more securely by the aid of a finger moistened in champagne.

Having accomplished this, she glanced round the table, and was horrified at some of the things that met her view. Miss

Sophonisba was giggling violently, and carrying on a most *prononcé* flirtation with Lord Elmton, who sat beside her, and who was by no means loth to amuse himself to the uttermost with the curious society to which he had so unexpectedly been introduced.

Mrs. Gardon had succumbed to her potations, and was rocking herself backwards and forwards, with tears running down her cheeks, bemoaning in a low voice that she had ever come, that she had ever married Gardon, and that some port-wine had stained her bonnet strings.

But the widows were more uproarious. Seated between them, Laurence, who was dismayed to find Christian so surrounded, was doing all in his power to excite and render them objectionable, in the hope of sooner disgusting her with the whole proceeding. He lost no opportunity of replenishing their glasses from the decanter in front of him, or of encouraging them to talk vociferously; and his tactics suddenly took effect by Mrs. Thomas springing up and attempting to propose Christian's health, in a manner that left no doubt of her condition. Dr. Barker sprang to her feet.

"We shall be late for the train, Miss Ettrick," she exclaimed, endeavoring to look self-possessed, and ignoring the culprit, who had subsided into her chair, and was crying helplessly, "I am right away glad you could receive us, and shall hope to see you on Thursday—8.30 sharp. As to the meeting, I'll let you know—I guess it'll be Wednesday, but I can't say till we know which day Eliza Washington Bang will be free. Come, ladies, it is time we should be moving."

And shaking hands with Christian, Dr. Barker suddenly hooked her arm into that of Mrs. Thomas, the most overcome of the widows, directing Miss Sophonisba, by a jerk of her head, to secure the safety of the other. Mrs. Gardon, feebly moaning, was led away by Miss Tibbs, and the rest followed, Mrs. Sloman executing a reverence to the marchioness that might almost have satisfied the demands for homage of the Emperor of China.

So rapid were Dr. Barker's movements that the whole party were outside the hall-door almost before Christian could ring and give directions that the carriages should come round.

"My dear, what does it all mean?" said Lady Elmshire,

turning to her hostess in utter bewilderment; while Lord Elmton lay back in his chair in a fit of uncontrollable laughter, in which Laurence had much difficulty in preventing himself from joining—indeed, he could hardly have done so had he not remembered Christian's intense aversion to ridicule, and felt certain that to laugh at her would be exactly the way to rouse the germ of obstinacy dormant in most dispositions.

"It was a deputation from the Society for the Emancipation of Women at Elmton," said Christian, wishing much that her visitors had somewhat postponed their visit. "They came to ask me to join the committee, and I have done so."

"What, joined those dreadful, vulgar, tipsy women! Heavens! My dear, you must be mad! Do pray write and say you have reconsidered the matter. Indeed, it is a serious business! You are so young and inexperienced, and so very easily compromised."

"I am not afraid," said Christian, smiling. "You know, dear Lady Elmshire, I have always been interested in the cause of female suffrage and emancipation, and this is the first opportunity I have had of really joining in the work. Attending the committee can do me no harm; and those at the head of the movement seem to think my position may be of advantage to them."

"But, my dear, just consider, one of these—people was a positive Bloomer; another was very near being so. Do pray pause before you commit yourself to anything so terribly unfeminine!"

"I have no present intention of being a Bloomer," said Christian, laughing in spite of herself.

"It really wasn't so unbecoming to my fair friend with the blue eyes," said Lord Elmton. "She was decidedly good-looking, and evidently doesn't want to be emancipated from flirting. She asked me to a meeting, and when I promised to go, intimated I might perhaps have a seat on the platform and second a resolution. She was rather loth to go when that determined female carried them all off."

"That was Dr. Barker, the treasurer," said Christian.

"But indeed, my dear," said Lady Elmshire, "they are not people with whom you ought to associate. I know you've all sorts of odd notions about equality and such things, but surely

you must have been disgusted by those tipsy women. I never saw such a thing before, and was quite frightened."

Now the iniquities of Mesdames Thomas, Jones, and Gardon had shocked and disgusted Christian to the full as much as they had Lady Elmshire; nay, more, for the members of a committee stood somewhat on a pedestal in her mind, and their fall was therefore proportionately great; but it seemed to her that it would be cowardly, and deserting her colors, to admit how great her dismay had been, so she merely shirked the question, and, turning to Lord Elmton, informed him that there would probably be a meeting on the following Wednesday, and mentioned the expected lecturer.

"I shall go and hear her, most certainly," said Laurence, speaking for the first time; and although Lady Elmshire overwhelmed him with reproaches for encouraging Christian in her absurdities, he felt tolerably sure that his announcement of such an intention had been an important step towards winning her confidence, and inducing her afterwards to listen to any exposition he might make of the absurdities propounded by Miss Sophonisba Jinks or Miss Eliza Washington Bang.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I know that you are weeping inly,
  Though smiling in my face with care;
That, though you speak to me so bravely,
  To draw each breath you hardly dare;
That you are beating in great anguish
  Against a sorrow yet unknown;
That you are striving in affection
  To hold subdued each throbbing moan."

Meta Orred.

SIR LINDSAY was certainly justified in saying that he had known Mrs. Marsfield well. He had admired her as a handsome, showy girl, had flirted desperately with her as a means of passing the time, which hung so heavily on his hands in dull quarters at Timborough, and would in all probability have married her for the sake of her fortune, had not Mr. Mars-

field appeared upon the scene, and utterly eclipsed Captain Ettrick's future baronetcy by his own prospective coronet.

Lindsay was rather sore at the time, and deeply regretted the fortune he had coveted; but as his affections had never been engaged, and as he had now married a woman substantially well off, although by no means so rich as had been Miss Smith, the manufacturer's daughter, he had no objection whatever to meeting once more a woman who amused him and took all trouble off his hands. It is true he invariably called her bad style, and objected to her being fast and slang, and would have been frantic at the idea of his wife in any way resembling her; still, she amused him, and required no exertion whatever on his part, and he therefore infinitely preferred her society to that of any other woman, perhaps, of his acquaintance, certainly to that of any one to be found within reach of Knotlem. She was not his wife; her slang talk, fast manners, and tendency to flirtation were, therefore, nothing to him. Indeed, as he found himself at once installed as first favorite, the latter propensity was rather pleasant to him than otherwise. No man is averse to being flattered by the marked attention of a decidedly handsome woman, more especially when, as was the case with Mrs. Marsfield, she is a species of leader in the society in which he lives.

Mrs. Marsfield contrived to render her father-in-law, Lord Cottington's house, where she reigned supreme, remarkably pleasant. The old lord disliked her cordially; his manners were those of the old *régime* of somewhat ceremonious courtesy, and there was hardly an action of his daughter-in-law's life, or a sentiment which she uttered, that did not, in a greater or less degree, jar all his sensibilities; but he had made his bargain, and stuck to it manfully.

He had been on the extreme verge of ruin; Mr. Josiah Smith was ambitious of being connected with the peerage; Miss Laura Smith had wealth and considerable personal attractions; Philip Marsfield, the only son of the house, was fascinated by her beauty to the pitch of utterly disregarding her want of breeding. Lord Cottington judged it prudent that the young people should live with him, gravely mistrusting his daughter-in-law's steadiness if left entirely to herself; but though determined on this point, he professed to make an immense favor of it, demanding, as a reward, the solemn promise

of Mr. Josiah Smith, that never under any pretext should he intrude himself either at Marsfield or in Grosvenor Place, or expect that his daughter should visit him at Timborough.

It was a sore blow to Mr. Smith's hopes; he had cherished rosy visions of intimate association with the great ones of the earth, and the destruction of his airy castles gave him a bitter pang; still, he had the sense to see that it would be a great advantage that his daughter, of whose fastness he was fully aware, should dwell under her father-in-law's roof, and also that he had no means of compelling Lord Cottington to receive him into his house; so he acceded with the best grace he could, and consoled himself as well as he was able by talking largely of "my daughter, the Honorable Mrs. Marsfield," and of "old Cottington," and of all the members of the Marsfield connection, whom he barely knew by sight, by their Christian names.

But during the two years that he lived after his daughter's marriage, he adhered most rigidly to the compact, and Lord Cottington continued to observe it as strictly even after his decease. Philip Marsfield continued to be as desperately in love with his wife, and to think her every action as perfect after six years of married life, as he had done during his brief period of courtship. Her word was his absolute law, her pleasure his only study, and he would have suffered grave personal inconvenience rather than have interfered with her slightest whim. No thought of jealousy ever crossed his mind; and here, perhaps, he was right, for even his father, deeply as his taste was offended by his daughter-in-law's manifold flirtations, was forced to acquit her of any graver sin than that of frivolity.

Grave chaperons raised their eyebrows and pronounced Mrs. Marsfield "bad style," younger matrons called her "awfully fast, and tremendously slang," men voted her "awfully jolly—no nonsense about her," their general *argôt* for women who prefer their society, flatter their vanity, and are not over-scrupulous as to what they say or what is said to them; but still there was "nothing against" Mrs. Marsfield. Her husband was generally with her, excepting when she was out hunting, and he was well known to approve of everything that she did. It was clearly no one's business to complain. And indeed matters were infinitely better than they might have appeared

to a casual observer. Mrs. Marsfield loved her husband as much as it was possible for her to love any one, and her flirtations, violent as they often were, had no more to do with the tender passion than they had with algebra. They arose from an extreme love of admiration, aided by an education so imperfect as to cause the time that was not occupied by some species of excitement to hang very heavily on her hands.

It was also an amusement to her to see how her appropriation of a man disturbed his wife, or marred the enjoyment of the girl to whom he had been paying attention; and this not from positive heartlessness, but from never having had thought for others, or abstinence from giving pain, pointed out to her as a duty. Her father's teaching had always been that she would have plenty of money, and had no need ever to think of anything, save enjoying herself as much as she could; and such training was too pleasant and too well suited to her naturally self-indulgent temperament not to have borne fruit. In short, like so many of the young people of the day, Laura Marsfield had never been taught to think, or to give a moment's consideration to aught save her own amusement and gratification: and she pursued her career, proud of the "conquests" she achieved, and amused when the pain they gave to others became apparent.

She had liked Lindsay very much in the old Timborough days, partly because he was the first *gentleman* with whom she had ever been brought in contact, and she was very glad to welcome him as a recruit to the staff of her admirers at Knotlem. Besides, Hyacinth was pretty, and, what was more, was cheery, bright, and much admired.

Mrs. Marsfield did not love a rival near her throne, and it was pleasant to prove to the usurper that her husband, at any rate, worshiped at what she considered the orthodox shrine. Poor Hyacinth! all the admiration Mrs. Marsfield grudged her she would willingly have foregone, if only Lindsay had been left to her. She loved him with a devotion of which he was utterly unworthy, and which he was incapable of even comprehending. He had been very desperately in love with her before their marriage, and had indeed given the strongest possible proof of it by renouncing Christian's larger fortune for her sake. He would have professed himself devotedly attached to her at the present time, and really was very fond

of her, more especially when his vanity was flattered by seeing how greatly she was admired; but his love, which had at first burned and blazed so ardently, was now smouldering, and often well-nigh imperceptible; while hers, on the contrary, burned on in a clear and steady flame. He would have been infinitely aggrieved and affronted if this had been represented to him, and would have demanded what he had done, and what more his wife could either want or expect. Her feelings respecting Mrs. Marsfield he would have laughed to scorn, and characterized as ridiculous jealousy and utterly absurd, though all the time he was passing many hours daily in that lady's company.

His conduct, however, was having a disastrous effect upon his wife. Young, warm-hearted, and absolutely devoted to him, Hyacinth was mortified beyond expression to find herself deserted, whenever Mrs. Marsfield came in sight, for a woman who, inexperienced in the world's ways as she was, her taste enabled her to perceive was slang and *mauvais ton.* Her chief comfort was to hear Lindsay inveigh, as he was by no means backward in doing, against Mrs. Marsfield's bad style, but she soon discovered that it was by no means prudent for her to follow his lead. At her first word of disapprobation he would at once turn round, retort that he did not see any great difference between the doings of Mrs. Marsfield and of any other lady in the neighborhood, except that she was lively and amusing, while they were dull and stupid, and probably end with a sneer at the jealousy of women, who could never bear to see any one admired except themselves.

It is a thing well-nigh impossible to open the eyes of a true-hearted woman, devotedly attached to her husband, to the existence of the clay feet of her idol; she fondly believes in the genuineness of the gold, until some rude shock renders further blindness impossible. When she realizes that he is, after all, human, she often passes to the hardly less erroneous supposition that no gold ever existed save in her imagination, and that all not only is, but always has been, clay.

No thought of blaming Lindsay ever entered Hyacinth's mind. She was incessantly inventing the most elaborate and ingenious excuses for his proceedings, while she hated the woman who tempted him from her side with a bitter hatred that would positively have appalled her, had she realized it herself.

She had once caught a pitying but triumphant smile on Mrs. Marsfield's face as she looked somewhat wistfully towards her husband, where he sat utterly engrossed by the siren's wiles; her pride was roused, and never again could that lady or any one else observe that Lady Ettrick seemed in the least disturbed by her husband's preoccupation. Hyacinth talked, and laughed, and rode, and was foremost in all the amusements of the neighborhood. Nor was her interest wholly assumed; the life was utterly new to her, and she enjoyed it keenly for its own sake; but she would hardly have thrown herself so eagerly and so feverishly into all possible dissipation had her mind been at ease or her home truly happy. It cannot be denied that at times she enjoyed herself exceedingly, and when she and Lindsay were alone, and he talked pleasantly, and abstained from discoursing entirely of Marsfield and its fair mistress, she was as happy as could be. It required a very small amount of attention from her adored husband to raise her into the seventh heaven, but she was too proud to let others see this, and concealed it so carefully that even if Lindsay had been more observant than was the case, he might have remained unaware of it.

And so the winter, an exceptionally open one, wore on, Hyacinth going everywhere, and seeming the life and soul of everything, while her heart was heavy with a sorrow of which she did not know the name; if she had guessed that it was jealousy, she would at once have taken herself to task for harboring a thought so disloyal as that Lindsay could possibly do wrong. And so she went on her way, earning for herself, in her determination not to show her grief, the reputation of being terribly and unmistakably fast.

Since the departure of their governess on their seventeenth birthday, Christian and Hyacinth had had no one in the world to point out to them the things that were or were not in accordance with the usages of the world and the proprieties of life.

Naturally, Hyacinth, young and inexperienced, was liable to be guilty of many lapses from the course strictly prudent for one so attractive and left so much to her own devices, and there were plenty of envious tongues ready to make the worst of any of her innocent imprudences.

Mrs. Marshem, whose windows commanded the entrance to

Knotlem Lodge, and whose daughters day after day spread the five o'clock tea-table in forlorn hope of the callers who never came, professed herself "perfectly shocked" at the number of young men who frequented the Lodge. "Whether Sir Lindsay is out or not it is all the same," she confided to her prime confidante, old Lady Campbell. "Mary and Anastasia went in to call the other evening at five o'clock, and they found her alone with Sir Henry Martin, and Colonel Vernon, and Charles Percy, and Mr. Palmer. Only think!"

"There's safety in numbers," returned Lady Campbell, who had been considerably fascinated by Hyacinth's bright looks and engaging manners; "so long as she has four at a time it won't do much harm."

"Well, I'm sure I'm thankful my Caroline"—this was Mrs. Marshem's only married daughter, a somewhat acid dame, utterly devoid of social tact or conversational powers—"has too strict a notion of propriety to imitate such proceedings. She would never dream of admitting gentlemen when her husband was out."

"Then she would be a goose," said Lady Campbell. "I tell you what it is, my dear, from what I hear Mrs. Marsfield has been at her old game, and has taken possession of Sir Lindsay. More shame for him, not to be satisfied with a bright, pretty thing like his wife. But I don't believe there's a bit of harm in Lady Ettrick, even if she has all the young men in Knotlem to tea every day."

And the shrewd old lady was right. Of harm—meaning of course willful flirtation—Hyacinth was as innocent as the most guileless infant, and all the men who formed the *entourage* of the Lodge were perfectly aware of the fact, and treated her accordingly. Of mirth, laughter, and badinage there was enough and to spare in the bright little orientally-furnished drawing-room, but sentiment was conspicuous by its absence; and despite all Mrs. Marshem's mysterious head-shakings and spiteful innuendoes, not a word was ever spoken to Hyacinth that might not have been proclaimed at the market cross.

Such utterly true-hearted and guileless women never fail to command the respect they deserve; unless, indeed, they have the ill fortune to encounter some man who is not a gentleman, and Hyacinth was happily spared such an infliction.

Sir Lindsay liked the gatherings at the Lodge, and always

seemed pleased, when he returned home, to hear that many people had been there; he liked to know that his wife was courted and popular, it enhanced his opinion of his own good taste.

Another indictment preferred against Lady Ettrick by those jealous of her social success was, that it was "positively indecent" that she should go out so much when her mourning was so deep; but here again she was hardly to blame. When the first invitation for a dance had arrived she had shown it to Lindsay, remarking that of course she could not go; but he had ridiculed her scruples, and was evidently so annoyed when she urged them that, caring more to please him than for what any one in the world could say, she had consented; and of course, having been to one dance, she went to all.

The Marsfield fancy ball was to take place early in January, and she protested against going to it, as it would involve leaving off her mourning altogether; but Lindsay had set his heart on her appearing in the principal quadrille, and remarked that it was rather hard she should wish to pay respect to her father's memory rather than to her husband's wishes; and such an expression of his will was sufficient for Hyacinth, who would have arrayed herself daily as the Queen of Sheba, if he had expressed a wish for it. Mrs. Marsfield had selected "Court Beauties of France" as the subject of her quadrille, assuredly with somewhat questionable taste, for, though the original heroines were undoubtedly fair, they were as certainly frail. Agnes Sorel, Diane de Poitiers, La Reine Margot, Gabrielle d'Estrées, Louise de la Vallière, Madame de Fontanges, Madame de Montespan, and Madame de Pompadour, were the eight celebrities selected—La Reine Margot falling to Hyacinth's share.

Lindsay drew the character of Henry of Navarre, which suited Mrs. Marsfield to perfection, as she was Gabrielle. Hyacinth's lovely chestnut curls showed to perfection; they had been turned up and hidden of late, for Mrs. Marsfield, whose own hair could by no device be induced to curl, had laughed at her *coiffure à l'enfant*, and Lindsay had immediately begun to wonder "why she wore her hair so differently from any one else."

So not without considerable regret she had turned all the lovely curls into puffs and plaits, out of which, notwithstand-

ing, an occasional ringlet would make itself visible. It can hardly be said that Hyacinth enjoyed that, her first fancy ball. Mrs. Marsfield was excited by the success of the entertainment and by the becomingness of her own costume, and took advantage of her assumed character to flirt more openly than usual with her cavalier. Hyacinth was decidedly uncomfortable; as we have said, she was not yet jealous, it had never yet dawned upon her as possible that her husband's love could possibly be alienated from her. She was really too guileless to believe such a thing to be possible, but that night she felt a pang of something totally new to her, a feeling to which she was not accustomed. Perhaps if she had looked longer at King Henry and La Belle Gabrielle her feelings might have developed, have taken form and substance, and she might have discovered that this strange pang was caused by the existence of the green-eyed monster.

But she had but little time for reflection; she was more surrounded than usual, partly by those who really liked her as a lively, honest-hearted, and charming woman; partly by those who, indignant at Sir Lindsay's behavior, claimed her attention in the hope of preventing her observing it.

Among these was Lord Cottington, who watched his daughter-in-law's proceedings with grave displeasure, naturally tempered with relief at knowing, by long experience, that it was her vanity that was engaged, and not her feelings, but perhaps in his inmost soul despising her all the more for that knowledge. He distinguished Hyacinth so much as to make her some new enemies among the dowagers, who could not see why such a fuss should be made about Lady Ettrick; but of this effect of his well-meant efforts for her comfort and amusement he was happily unconscious.

"It is not often that I interfere with your amusements, you will allow," he remarked, coldly, to his daughter-in-law, when they met the next morning, "but I must really protest against your making yourself so conspicuous as you did last night. Of course I make all allowance for your want of early training; still, I should have hoped that, after six years passed under my roof and in the society of our class, you would have learned how to behave. Pray, has Philip made no remark on your conduct?"

"I don't know what you mean," returned Mrs. Marsfield,

flushing with indignation; her father-in-law's reproofs were rare, but she dreaded them inexpressibly, there was a scornful coldness in them that drove her frantic.

"Really? I can hardly imagine that; however, if you do not, I mean your conduct with Sir Lindsay Ettrick, with whom you flirted most disgracefully."

"I never flirted in my life!" exclaimed Mrs. Marsfield, angrily.

Lord Cottington raised his eyebrows.

"Pardon me, you are entirely under a misapprehension. I have seen you do so on many occasions, though hardly in so remarkable a manner as last night. However, what I wish to say is this: I cannot allow my son's wife to render herself conspicuous, and I desire that you will not invite Sir Lindsay here again, as you have done lately, unaccompanied by Lady Ettrick."

"She is so stupid and uninteresting!" said Mrs. Marsfield, sullenly.

"Possibly you may find her so. She is essentially a lady, and a very charming one—but that is nothing to the point. Be good enough to remember my wishes. May I give you some coffee?" And Lord Cottington relapsed into his usual ceremonious politeness.

His daughter-in-law was too angry to trust herself to speak. She did not see that her conduct had been in any way unusual, and deeply resented being forbidden to have Lindsay at Marsfield to luncheon, five o'clock tea, or any of the other informal gatherings to which he could be asked without Hyacinth. She specially affected having the hero of the hour to breakfast before hunting, and then enjoying a *tête-à-tête* in riding to covert—for Philip Marsfield, if he went at all, generally preferred driving his tandem.

Sir Lindsay had breakfasted at Marsfield almost every morning of late, when Hyacinth did not go out—for she had never been invited to join the party; and very often, indeed, he had returned to luncheon or tea, if they left off anywhere within reasonable distance. And now these pleasant meetings were forbidden, and Mrs. Marsfield felt bitterly angry, and as mortified as a spoiled child suddenly rebuked and punished. But, angry as she was, no thought of rebellion entered her mind. She was quite aware that it was an advantage to reside

under her father-in-law's roof—that many people who were now cordial and friendly would cease to be so if she were deprived of Lord Cottington's countenance, which would certainly be the case if she neglected the few wishes which he ever uttered. So she said nothing, but bitterly detested the innocent Hyacinth, to whose fascination of "that stupid old man" she attributed her lecture. Her passion for admiration was omnivorous, and she grudged her rival the admiration of even her own father-in-law, although she was well aware that it would never be accorded to herself. Lord Cottington's refined taste pointed to an extremely different type of beauty; and one of those kind friends whose apparent *raison d'être* is the repetition of unpleasant speeches, had informed his daughter-in-law of his criticism when, on her first appearance at Knotlem, he had been congratulated on her beauty.

"Handsome? Well, yes, I suppose so—in a certain style; but I confess I prefer a plain lady to a handsome barmaid."

It was very severe, and it was never intended to reach its object's ears—which, however, it naturally did, within two days of its utterance, and was indelibly impressed upon her memory as a thing to be neither forgotten nor forgiven. Still, as she was not given to troubling herself unnecessarily, the wheels of life usually revolved more smoothly at Marsfield than in many mansions where the inmates were more really harmonious; and it was only when her temper was roused by one of Lord Cottington's rare reproofs that she disturbed herself at all about what his opinion of her might be.

She did not choose to tell Lindsay that she had been forbidden to receive him again without his wife—it would be too humiliating to own herself a child under orders,—so she resolved to discard him for a short time, and to take up another adorer—a young Mr. Formby,—who had only just arrived at Knotlem, and had already given strong symptoms of coveting the position of *attaché*. So at the meet, the ensuing day, Lindsay was stupefied, and Hyacinth puzzled but delighted, to find that Mrs. Marsfield accorded him but a brief salutation, and rode off in conspicuous *tête-à-tête* with the new favorite, who seemed to be thoroughly gratified with his position.

To say that Lindsay was angry would be to say little; he was deeply mortified and thoroughly savage. But he was

determined no one should see it; and as the first means of showing himself at ease, he began paying Hyacinth attentions to which, from him, she had long been a stranger. There was little need for Sir Henry Martin, or any of her usual cavaliers, to proffer their wonted assistance in giving her a lead, or any other help; with Lindsay at her side, she had neither eyes nor ears for any one else. He ought to have felt flattered; but even if he had had thought to spare for her evident delight at having him with her once more, or for anything but observation of the proceedings of the magnificent figure on the showy chestnut, he was so perfectly convinced that it was his wife's bounden duty to adore and think him perfect, no matter what he might do, that he was not likely to be struck by her devotion.

Mrs. Marsfield kept up her flirtation with Mr. Formby for several weeks, during which Hyacinth was eminently happy, notwithstanding Lindsay's decidedly variable temper. Then gradually Mr. Formby was dropped, and Lindsay partially reinstated, for, affronted as he had been, he still could not resist the temptation when it was put enticingly before him.

So, on the whole, although Hyacinth had enjoyed her winter in some ways, had indeed enjoyed the actual hunting even more than she had anticipated, she was by no means sorry when the end of March brought the season to a close, and they left Knotlem for their house, chosen for them by Mrs. Ettrick, in Park Street. They had resolved on taking one for the season, and looking at their leisure for one they might care to purchase. The knowledge that Lord Cottington had refused to remove to Grosvenor Place till the middle of May, almost comforted her for Lindsay's peremptory refusal to pay Christian a visit on their way from Knotlem. Without Mrs. Marsfield to interfere, she should be happy as the day was long; she should have Lindsay all to herself, and should enjoy herself accordingly.

CHAPTER XXII.

> " . . . jealousy:
> It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on."
>
> *Othello.*

It was with a feeling of immense relief that Hyacinth awoke on the first morning after her arrival in Park Street. At first she hardly realized either where she was or whence the relief proceeded, but very soon she was fairly awake, and rejoicing over her escape from the immediate neighborhood of that "disagreeable woman."

She was young and sanguine, and never doubted that now everything would be as charming as heart could wish. The only cloud on the horizon was the extremely close vicinity of her mother-in-law, for whom, as the reader is aware, she by no means cherished any affection. Mrs. Ettrick had changed her quarters from Green Street to a tiny mansion in Chapel Street, and was therefore within a stone's throw of the house she had chosen for her son, and Hyacinth foresaw that she should probably have far more of her company than she at all desired. Still, if it pleased Lindsay, nothing mattered to her, and she recalled his expression of pleasure at having his mother so near to them, and felt that so long as he was content, and no one came between them, she must be perfectly happy.

The true meaning of what had been going on under her eyes at Knotlem had never once dawned upon her. She had been vaguely uncomfortable, and anxious that no one should guess that she was so—nothing more. That any one had called her fast she was blissfully unconscious, and so indeed was Sir Lindsay, whose head had been far too much occupied with his own amusements, and the society of the woman who took all trouble off his hands and flattered his vanity, to have noticed anything remarkable in her conduct. And indeed all she had done had been very harmless. She had ridden harder, and laughed more, and made herself more generally agreeable, than she would have done had Lindsay had no other attrac-

tion; but she was as far from being fast, either in feeling or in intention, as was well possible.

Some rumors, however, greatly exaggerated, as is the wont of rumors to be, had reached Mrs. Ettrick's ears, and she was fully prepared to say to her son, "I told you so—I told you she was wild," whenever he complained of his wife's conduct. But she quickly perceived that at present Lindsay was well satisfied, and therefore determined to say nothing, but to watch the course of events.

Little dreaming what much worse interference she was escaping, Hyacinth felt her mother-in-law's incessant remarks upon, and advice respecting, her household arrangements, an unspeakable annoyance. In all her domestic plans she was actuated by but one thought—what would Lindsay like?—what would please him best? It was very aggravating when, very probably at considerable sacrifice of her own wishes or convenience, she had succeeded in arranging everything exactly as she thought he would like it, to have Mrs. Ettrick coming in, knowing nothing of her motives, and animadverting on her proceedings, till she very often succeeded in turning Lindsay himself against what had been done.

It was well for Hyacinth that she was blessed with a sweet temper, for during her first month in Park Street it was severely tried. Mrs. Ettrick chose to assume that she could know nothing in the world of the management of a household, electing to forget that she had lived with Christian, who had managed her father's house to perfection, and also that she had had five months' experience of a household of her own.

Whenever it was practicable Hyacinth listened in silence, and afterwards took her own way—a fact which her mother-in-law speedily discovered, and did not readily forgive. In fact, it would have been very difficult indeed to have found two women with more thoroughly antipathetic natures; the elder cold, selfish, worldly, and heartless, caring for nothing save worldly position and money, and with no soft point save her love for her son and a certain mild regard for her daughter; the other warm, sympathetic, and affectionate, caring nothing for the world, as the world, but enjoying keenly and naturally all the pleasures it affords, never giving a thought to money, or believing that others could be actuated by regard for it, and with all her heart and soul centred on one object—her peer-

less, incomparable husband! Rather than trouble or annoy him, she bore much in silence, and refrained from complaining of his mother's constant interference.

Their arrival in London took place about ten days before Easter, and consequently at first town was exceedingly quiet. There was nothing Hyacinth would have enjoyed more than a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with her husband; but he was out most of the day, and she grew inexpressibly weary of Mrs. Ettrick's company. That lady would arrive about twelve o'clock, and invite herself to stay to luncheon, and to drive in the afternoon; and would then be deposited in Chapel Street, but return to dinner, occupying all the time, when she was alone with her daughter-in-law, in giving her good worldly advice, and specially recommending her to be very quiet, and not get into a fast set. Excellent advice, certainly, but Hyacinth grew so inexpressibly weary of the daily reiteration, that she sometimes felt inclined to join any set, however fast, or do anything, however desperate, that would deliver her from her mother-in-law's constant company and perennial purring platitudes.

She hailed with lively satisfaction the arrival in London of Lady Tynedale, and Mrs. Ettrick was annoyed to find that, on several occasions, Lady Ettrick was not at home at luncheon-time. She hated Lady Tynedale. She always felt an uneasy consciousness that she saw through her professions and manœuvres, which was indeed the case, and always dreaded being exposed and covered with confusion. She tried to persuade her son that Lady Tynedale was a very bad companion for his wife, but Lindsay knew better. He knew that, the wife of a man old enough to be her father, followed, admired, and courted as were few women, Lady Tynedale's name stood high as a model wife and mother, and he therefore laughed at all his mother's innuendoes. But he little dreamed what a storm he was raising, when, one day, he carelessly mentioned that she was to present Hyacinth. Despite her artistically manipulated complexion, Mrs. Ettrick turned positively livid.

"And pray what have I done?" she said, in a grating tone, contrasting strangely with her usual softly modulated utterances—"Pray, what have I done that I am not considered a proper person to present my son's wife?"

Sir Lindsay was positively aghast. The proper etiquette

of such a proceeding as his wife's presentation had never occurred to him, and very naturally it had not to her. She had asked him if she should ask her cousin to present her, and he had consented. Lady Tynedale, indeed, when Hyacinth made her request, asked, with some surprise, if Mrs. Ettrick were not going, and Hyacinth, having heard nothing on the subject, answered innocently in the negative; so it had been settled, and Lindsay would not hear of the arrangement being disturbed, though he was considerably annoyed, and told his wife so.

"She really ought to have been more thoughtful. His mother was terribly hurt."

Hyacinth was sorry that he was annoyed, and, much as she preferred going with her cousin, at once offered to change the arrangement, and to explain the matter to Lady Tynedale; but Sir Lindsay was thoroughly put out, and answered crossly that it was too late now, that she ought to have thought of it before, and much more to the same effect; all unspeakably unjust, of course, as he had been himself consulted, but injustice is the tolerably certain companion of ill humor.

In her anxiety to please him, Hyacinth endeavored to pacify her mother-in-law, but this was a task beyond her power. When once Mrs. Ettrick was affronted she was well-nigh implacable, and this had been a very bitter blow to her self-importance. However, her anger did Hyacinth one service. She did not choose to remain in London to be slighted, as she called it, and therefore selected the period of the unfortunate presentation to pay a long-promised visit in Devonshire. Her departure was a great relief to her daughter-in-law, who felt herself free, for the first time since her arrival in London, to do as she pleased, and to go where she liked at her own hour. For a short time this delicious sense of freedom lasted, but then, the constant occupation and irritation of his mother's presence withdrawn, Hyacinth became quite startled to think how very little she saw of her husband.

When they first reached London the riding-horses did not accompany them, as they were supposed to require some rest and refreshment after the fatigues of the hunting season; but Bay Charmer and Lindsay's handsomest hack had now arrived, and she was at a loss to account for the little interest he seemed to take in them. In the days before their marriage, when he

had been drawing vivid pictures of all the delights of their future life, riding in the park had formed a conspicuous feature in his pleasant programme; it was therefore doubly surprising to find him now so remarkably indifferent about it. He rode with her the first two days, then said it was slow—rather a bore; and on her exclaiming in surprise, replied that of course there was no reason in the world why she should not ride. The groom could ride Crusader, and then he need not feel himself tied.

"But I would rather go with you," Hyacinth had meekly objected: "if you like walking better, I have had plenty of riding this winter. We might walk most days, and only ride when you fancied it."

"Really, Hyacinth, when I only had the horses up to please you, I think you might at any rate seem to care a little about it. I'm sure you have always talked as if riding in the park were the thing you most looked forward to in London."

"Yes—yes; indeed, Lindsay, I do enjoy it very much, only—I thought you liked it too."

"So I do, sometimes; but I can't stand not being free. If I turn up dutifully for dinner-parties, that is all you can expect."

Hyacinth did not either like or understand it. Surely Lindsay knew that any day that he wanted to amuse himself any other way, she was ready and willing either to accompany him, if he wished for her society, or to stay at home if he did not. There was surely no necessity for making preparation for what sounded very much like a separate state of existence. She began to say something of this, but Lindsay at once waxed peevish.

"Really, Hyacinth, there is no use talking about it. I can't and I won't be tied down to anything at any particular hour. Why can't you be satisfied? There are the horses. You can go out whenever you like. Of course I shall ride sometimes, but I won't make a rule about it."

So Hyacinth was fain to go by herself, if she went at all, for Sir Lindsay was enjoying himself greatly, and was always either just going to the Club, or to Tattersall's, or to Prince's, when Bay Charmer came to the door. If he had been going to stay at home, no sunshine, no prospect of amusement would have tempted her to leave him; but as he left her, she saw no reason why she should not amuse herself. And amuse herself

she certainly did. All was utterly new to her: she was young, good-looking, vivacious, and attractive, and her acquaintance increased day by day. Lady Tynedale, from the height of her greater experience, looked on in considerable perplexity.

"I wish I knew what to do," she said, talking the matter over with her husband. "She is doing no harm—indeed, poor child, she does not know what harm is—there is her great danger. Under the circumstances, it is almost impossible to frame a warning that does not sound like a reproof, and, high-spirited as she is, I think that would do more harm than good."

"But, my dear Helen, why are you so uneasy? She does nothing more than most young married women—nothing more than you do yourself."

"True, dear; but when we were first married, you did not leave me to my own devices, as Sir Lindsay does Hyacinth. Besides, even if you had done so, I had been out three years, and knew something of the world I was living in; while she is as innocent and as unsuspicious as our Ethel would be. Five years hence he might leave her to herself with perfect safety; but really, after only ten months of matrimony, he might vouchsafe her a little care and attention."

"He never was a great favorite of yours."

"No; I always thought him selfish, and you see I was right. He left her to get on as she could, skating this afternoon, while he acted walking-stick to Mrs. Lyall. Poor child, she looked so wistfully at him once or twice; but when Captain Macpherson joined her, she seemed in the wildest spirits."

"Trying not to show she was hurt by Sir Lindsay's defection?"

"Exactly; and in her anxiety she overacts her part, and will get the name of being fast and wild."

"Shall you say anything to her?"

"Not unless some good opportunity presents itself, or else I am sure that I should do more harm than good. I wish I could get her more into our set; but he is more amused by a fast clique, and she is getting drawn into it."

Indeed, her life in London was far from being the period of happiness that Hyacinth had expected. Lindsay was always ready to dine out, but after having escorted his wife to two

evening parties and one ball, he announced that such festivities bored him, and that she must go by herself in future.

"Oh! no," said Hyacinth, who, greatly as she had enjoyed the first dissipations of her life, felt that to her no pleasure would be equal to a *tête-à-tête* with her husband, "I don't want to go out without you, Lindsay—it will be so pleasant to have some nice quiet evenings at home. I see so little of you in the day-time."

Sir Lindsay looked at her in unfeigned astonishment.

"Quiet evenings at home! My dear Hyacinth, you must be dreaming! Where in the world is the use of my belonging to the 'Turf,' and the 'Arlington,' and 'Pratt's,' except to go there at night? Where's the use of being in London at all, except to amuse one's self? No, it's all right—you go to your balls and parties, and enjoy yourself as much as you can. No one wants a married man at a ball. Besides, I've had enough of them—whist's much more in my way."

Hyacinth pleaded a little more, but it only had the usual effect of anything that crossed Lindsay's own inclinations—namely, of making him cross; and at last he exclaimed, in irritation, "that he wished to goodness he had never married!—life wasn't long enough to bear all this badgering and bullying!"

There was an end of any further protestation on Hyacinth's part. She said nothing, but she drew back, bitterly mortified, as indeed she well might be. Had she said such a thing to Lindsay, he would have thought it the most unnatural, the most iniquitous, the most extraordinary thing; but as it was he who said it to her, he thought nothing of it. It did not even occur to him that he had been rude, cross, and positively brutal, and he left the room, well satisfied at hearing no more remonstrances. He might hardly have been so well contented could he have seen the working of his wife's mind.

Hyacinth, excepting her husband, had known no man intimately except her father, who, besides being naturally of an equable temper, had outgrown the inclination to strong language and intemperate speeches, that really mean very little except passing annoyance, so common in younger men. So it naturally never dawned upon her that this cruel speech of Lindsay's meant nothing in the world but that he was cross,

and did not want to hear any more of the subject—that really he loved her as much as it was possible for him to love anything but himself; so she believed him—believed that he repented his marriage, and was tired of her, and sobbed her heart out accordingly.

But having cried till she could literally cry no longer, pride came to her aid, and with a sudden start she remembered Lindsay's strange preoccupation with Mrs. Marsfield during the whole winter at Knotlem. For the first time she understood her own feelings on seeing Henry of Navarre bending over the bold and beautiful representative of La Belle Gabrielle. For the first time she knew that she was jealous, and her temper and her pride rose together. If he preferred that bold, bad woman to her—to his own wife, who, he could hardly fail to know, fairly worshiped the ground on which he trod—she would at any rate not disturb him. He might follow the programme he had sketched out, going his own way and leaving her to go hers.

Never again would she utter a word against it—nay, she would carry out the programme to the letter, she would go everywhere and amuse herself to the uttermost—though, even as she made the resolve, the tears began once more to stream piteously down her cheeks—he should see that she could amuse herself without him, as he so evidently could without her. How she wished she had not said so much about wishing for his society! Yet perhaps it was better as it was; she knew now the footing on which they were; she loved him better than her life—here the sobs redoubled—and he was tired of her! She had read of such things, had heard that men were fickle, and did grow weary of their wives; but of being the object of such weariness she had never dreamed.

Well, the world should not know it; perhaps people might blame Lindsay, and that of all things must not be—it would be the drop that would cause her cup of bitterness to overflow. After all, it was not his fault, it must be hers, for being dull and stupid and uninteresting; it was strange, though, that others did not seem to find her so. Go where she might, she was always surrounded by people who seemed to like to be with her and to enjoy talking to her; it was hard, indeed, that her husband should be the only person who did not do so. And having given way to a final burst of tears, Hyacinth

retreated to her room, to bathe her eyes and remove all traces of emotion before encountering Lindsay.

There was to be a ball that evening—it was that indeed that had provoked the discussion; and, little inclined as she felt for dissipation, she determined to go,—it would show Lindsay that she was doing as he wished, and that he need not anticipate further remonstrance. She wondered much how he would meet her at dinner. Would he be cold, and show displeasure at her persistence in the morning? She glanced at him with nervous anxiety as he entered the drawing-room; but the occurrences of the morning had for the time escaped his memory; he had been well amused during the afternoon, and was in exceptionally high spirits. Was it because he had met Philip Marsfield, and learned that his wife would be in town in a couple of days? From whatever cause, he was unusually gay and pleasant, expressed decided approval when his wife announced her intention of going to Lady Bellenden's dance, and even vouchsafed to say that he was going to the "Turf," but might perhaps look in late. He took leave of her with a kiss, and Hyacinth felt happier than she had in the morning believed it possible that she ever could do again, and went to dress for her ball in considerably revived spirits.

As her maid was arranging her hair, she read over again a letter which she had received from Christian by the evening post, and observed for the first time the following postcript:—"I rode through Stanham yesterday; the lodge-woman told me they expected Mr. Lambert back next week; it is just a year since he went away." Hyacinth laid down the letter, and fell into so deep a reverie that her maid had to speak several times before she became aware that her hair was finished. "Coming back next week:" this was Friday, the 10th of May; next Thursday would be the 16th, the day on which Mr. Lambert was to return, to ask her once more to be his wife.

How she wished the day were past! How truly absurd! What in the world was there for her to fear? He doubtless was perfectly well aware that they had both been mistaken in their belief that Lindsay cared for Christian, and had long since reconciled himself to the fact that she had married her cousin, even if he had not long since forgotten all his ro-

mantic protestations on the island. Besides, even if he were not reconciled to the fact that she was married, what possible harm could he do her? And she sighed as she thought how terribly her bright dreams of eternal and devoted love had but that morning suffered shipwreck. It was unspeakably silly of her ever to give a thought to Mr. Lambert's return; very probably she might not see him, and if she did, what could it possibly signify?

But even as she told herself this, while she abstractedly clasped her bracelets and buttoned her gloves, there stole over her an indefinable sense of coming ill, and she walked downstairs to the brougham like one in a dream.

Much as she longed for Lindsay, greatly as she would have preferred a quiet *tête-à-tête* with him, she yet enjoyed herself greatly. It would have been strange if, with her eminently sociable disposition, and tasting for the first time the pleasures natural to her age and suitable to her temperament, she had not done so. She was young, good-looking, *piquante*, and new, and her success was proportioned to her qualifications. Her head was not turned; she was by no means vain, though she was far from disliking admiration, and enjoyed finding herself popular; her danger lay in her wish to drown sad thoughts in dissipation, and in the want of knowledge of the world, consequent on her secluded early life.

We have seen how conspicuous she had, without the least intention, contrived to make herself with Wilfred Lambert at the coming-of-age ball. Destitute of a guide or protector, it was more than probable that she would in perfect innocence do the same again. Her spirits were naturally extremely high, and had never been repressed by intercourse with the world; and, now that she was forcing them to hide sorrow and mortification, it was eminently probable that they would seem higher even than was natural.

Lady Tynedale, who might to some extent have served as her Mentor, never was to be seen in the fast set, in which Sir Lindsay had so many friends that Hyacinth was naturally drawn into it. She, poor child, knew nothing of different sets, and barely realized what was meant by "fast people." What she did was unknowingly and innocently, and even Mrs. Ettrick, who might, perhaps, have warned her of some of the dangers in her path, was absent. She had had some vague

idea that, as a married woman, she ought not to waltz; but Lindsay had ridiculed this unmercifully at Knotlem, and, as he did not object, she very naturally saw no reason why she should not enjoy herself.

But that night, at Lady Bellenden's dance, laugh as she might, and as she did, there still rung in her ears, "Mr. Lambert is expected home next week—next Thursday will be the 16th of May!" and Wilfred Lambert's face as he said, "This day next year I shall return, come what may," was ever before her eyes. Still, in spite of this—in spite, too, of the dead weight that had lain on her heart ever since her husband's hasty and unkind speech—she contrived, thanks to the buoyancy of youth, to enjoy herself immensely, although she constantly watched the door, in the hope of seeing Lindsay appear. But he did not come—whist had evidently proved too fascinating, and she danced on and on, till, on her return home, she was amazed to find that it was three o'clock.

The next morning, at breakfast, she detailed all her proceedings, and was hurt to perceive how very little interest her husband appeared to take in them; he was deep in an article in a sporting paper, and gave her recital but scant attention. Seeing this, she took up her correspondence—two or three circulars, and a letter addressed in a straggling hand, which she quickly recognized, having seen it only too often at Knotlem.

"The Marsfields are in London," she said, when she had read it, "or, rather, they come to-day. Mrs. Marsfield wants us to dine there to-morrow."

"All right—we're disengaged."

"But, Lindsay, it is Sunday."

"What of that?—one must eat one's dinner somewhere."

"Yes, but—only—that is, I never did dine out on a Sunday."

"Because you were never asked. For goodness' sake, don't set up Sabbatarian scruples!"

"Then you want to go?"

"Of course—it's more amusing than dining at home."

This was a bitter blow to Hyacinth, who thought a *tête-à-tête* with Lindsay perfect bliss; but she was determined not to show it, and said, carelessly,—

"I thought Lord Cottington was so resolved not to come till the end of the month."

"Ah! Well, I suppose he has changed his mind. If you care to ride this morning, I don't mind going too. Shall I order the horses?" And, on her delighted assent, he strolled out of the room.

Hyacinth was following, when her eye was caught by an envelope lying under his chair. She stooped to pick it up, and saw that it was directed in Mrs. Marsfield's hand, and bore the Knotlem post-mark. So! she was corresponding with Lindsay, and yet he pretended to be so little aware of her movements. What did it all mean? Poor Hyacinth felt miserable and bewildered as she crept into the library to lay the letter on Lindsay's table, and then up-stairs to put on her habit.

It would have surprised, and considerably mortified, the cavaliers who crowded round Lady Ettrick in the park, and talked afterwards of her marvelously high spirits, if they had known how absolutely unheeded their speeches fell upon her ear. She laughed and talked almost mechanically, all the energies of her mind being occupied in the endeavor to solve the problem—Did Lindsay care for Mrs. Marsfield? Had he been in love with her before her marriage?—and had the sight of her revived his old attachment? Was it this that made him regret his marriage with herself? Now that her eyes were opened, would the dinner the ensuing night bring her any nearer to the solution of these questions?

At present she could not answer; her mind was in a state of chaotic misery and unrest. Yet through it all, pride, the determination that none should guess her feelings, enabled her to talk, laugh, and jest, and appear the gayest of the gay.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of Holy Writ."

Othello.

It is now time to turn to Wilfred Lambert, and to inquire what he had been doing since we last saw him under the beech-tree in the Hyacinth Dell. He had left Stanham that very night, and, as we already know, had telegraphed to Hyacinth to say that he had sailed for America. Disappointed as he was at the present ill success of his suit, he still felt but little doubt of its ultimate issue. It was so clear that Lindsay was devoted to Christian, and she seemed to receive his attentions so much as a matter of course, that their marriage seemed to him a thing as certain as the due succession of the seasons; and such being the case, who could doubt that his sweet Hyacinth, the shock of her disappointment once overcome, would turn to him and reward his faithful attachment with her love? The more he thought of it, the more certain it seemed; his spirits began to rise, and he resolved to enjoy this journey to the uttermost, although he was counting the days that must elapse before his return. He felt he must stay away the whole year—he distrusted his own self-control, and knew that, if he were to return to England, he could not resist at once seeking Hyacinth. So he did his best to banish thought of her, and to concentrate his ideas on the pleasures of his journey—without, however, we are bound to add, any marked success.

The ring he had taken as a love-token from her, that last day on the island, never left his finger, and would have recalled his thoughts even if they had been disposed to wander. What would have been his feelings could he have known what was really the case?—that Hyacinth, having put the locket he had given her in exchange into the drawer of her rarely-opened writing-desk, had as completely forgotten its existence as if it had never been in her possession! Indeed, her memory of what had occurred on the island was far from being distinct; misery of feeling that she had given her heart, as she be-

lieved, unsought, the bewilderment and dismay consequent on the discovery that she had been inflicting on another the same agony which she was herself enduring, Wilfred's sudden departure, and the happy change which had come over her fortunes—all combined to render her recollection less perfect than it might have been, and of the interchange of tokens she retained not the faintest recollection. He would hardly have believed this. His sanguine nature rendered it impossible for him to realize that he could fail in anything on which his heart was so ardently set as it was on calling Hyacinth his wife, and day by day he dreamed blissful dreams of their future life together. Of course he told himself there must be a certain amount of sorrow in store for her at first; it must be a bitter pang to see herself supplanted by a sister in every respect, save that of wealth, so greatly her inferior; but she would soon reconcile herself to the inevitable, and, once his, never again should care or sorrow approach her.

So he mused, building stately castles in the air of future happiness, and picturing to himself how different Stanham would be with that bright spirit for its mistress. When he should have been wrapped in admiration of Niagara he saw little but Hyacinth, as she had looked that never-to-be-forgotten day under the great cedar at Stanham; a vision of the ruined abbey arch on the island at Ettrick would rise before his eyes, even as he gazed on the wondrous beauties of the Yosemite Valley, and the very name of the Bridal Veil Fall conjured up a picture of how *she* would look in her white robes standing with him at the altar.

In fact, he only saw all presented to his eyes through a vision of Hyacinth; perhaps it was that vision that made all he saw appear so bright and beautiful, that lent such rich coloring to the landscape, and gave such an unwonted brilliancy to the foliage. He traveled quickly, feeling unable to stay long in one place; rapid movement seemed to make time pass more swiftly, and to bring his reunion with Hyacinth nearer.

From San Francisco he visited Mexico, feeling a tinge of excitement at the danger, from which traveling in that country is never free, of being probably robbed, and possibly murdered; but no misadventure befell him.

Then, returning to San Francisco, he proceeded to Japan, China, and the Straits settlements; and after visiting Ceylon,

arrived in Calcutta, and immediately proceeded up the country for some shooting.

It was in December, at some outlying station where newspapers arrived but rarely, that in an old copy of the *Times* he saw a short notice of the funeral of Sir Loudoun Ettrick. Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick's names were mentioned as not having returned from abroad, and by this means he learned that the marriage had taken place. His prediction had been fulfilled, nor had its accomplishment been long delayed, for, glancing at the date of the paper, he saw that Sir Loudoun's funeral had taken place early in August, and his daughter must therefore have been married before that time, and was evidently abroad for the honeymoon. He thought very tenderly of Hyacinth, left alone, as he naturally imagined, in such mournful circumstances; he even weighed in his own mind the wisdom of returning home at once, and endeavoring to soothe her sorrow; but he finally decided to wait till the appointed day, thereby giving her more time to forget her feelings for her cousin. Of ultimate success he never suffered himself to doubt; his disposition was a sanguine one, and he had long since persuaded himself that it was utterly impossible that, once convinced of her cousin's indifference, Hyacinth could possibly resist his own devotion.

It seemed a terribly long time to wait till May—nearly five months; and he devoted himself, with even more ardor than before, to traveling, and the examination of every place of interest that came in his way. Egypt and the Holy Land occupied February and the early part of March; Easter was spent in Rome, Athens having been visited *en route*, and the latter half of April was devoted to Florence and the Riviera.

Little did he dream, as he passed admiringly along that lovely coast, drawing vivid pictures of Hyacinth's delight when he brought her to see what had so charmed him, that she had beheld it all six months before in company with another; or that at that time he had been as absolutely forgotten as if she had never seen him.

Reaching Paris the first week in May, he saw in an English paper the presentation of Lady Ettrick by Lady Tynedale. They were in London—then of course Hyacinth was with them, and they should meet in London, not in the Hyacinth Dell. He was rather sorry—he had drawn a vivid picture of

their meeting under the beech-tree; of her professions of surprise, although she well knew he would come; of his repetition of the important question; of her blushing silence, that would give consent; of his rapturous happiness.

Well, the latter part of the programme could be carried out equally well anywhere, his bliss would be too great to render the *mise en scène* of any special moment, and he began to count the hours till the eventful day. He reflected, as he leaned back in his corner of the railway-carriage as he sped Londonwards, that he did not know where Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick lived; but here again the *Morning Post* stood him in good stead, for, as he languidly cast his eye over the fashionable intelligence, he saw,—

"Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick entertained at dinner last evening, at their residence, 139 Park Street, Sir Charles and Lady Bellenden, Lord Elmton, etc., etc."

So there was the information he required. He had nothing to do the next morning but to walk to Park Street, ask for Hyacinth, and learn his fate. He could not comprehend the nervousness that kept him awake nearly the whole of that night—"What had he to fear?" he asked himself. Lindsay, his one rival, was fairly disposed of; it was hardly probable that during the winter she should have seen any one capable of supplanting him—surely then all must be right.

When once convinced of the utter hopelessness of her love for Lindsay, she would naturally turn to one whose sentiments were so well known to her—nay, she was probably looking forward to the meeting of the morrow with as much impatience as himself.

But, in spite of these sanguine anticipations, his nervousness increased, and when about half-past eleven the next morning he found himself at the door of 139 Park Street, it had assumed dimensions most unusual with him.

"Miss Ettrick at home?" he said, in as matter-of-fact a voice as he could assume, when the door opened after what had seemed to him an interminable delay.

The butler stared.

"Miss Ettrick! She don't live here, sir. She's in the country, sir, at Ettrick Hall?"

So, after all, he could not keep his tryst, for he well knew that the last train by which he could reach Ettrick was start-

ing at that moment. Fool! idiot that he had been, to assume so certainly that she must be with her sister, that it had never once struck him to inquire whether such were the case!

He stood so long lost in thought, revolving his own stupidity and disappointment, that the butler, not knowing exactly what to do, ventured to suggest that Lady Ettrick was at home, perhaps the gentleman might like to see her.

His voice roused Wilfred from his abstraction. If he could not see Hyacinth, he might as well at any rate see Christian, and hear all she could tell him about her sister; and he followed the servant almost mechanically. Preoccupied as he was, he was conscious of a sort of vague surprise at the manifold elegancies of the drawing-room into which he was ushered. He had often heard Hyacinth laugh at her sister for her contempt for the prettinesses of life, and had strongly suspected that Christian rather prided herself on this peculiarity, as evidencing a strong mind, superior to the frivolities of the day. It argued, therefore, a wonderful change in her tastes to find her drawing-room ornamented like a Louis Quinze boudoir, with blue furniture, lace antimacassars with pink bows, looking-glasses *à discrétion*, and china in every conceivable and inconceivable position. The curtains were pink, covered with lace; the rose-colored blinds were partially drawn down, though not so much as to prevent a full view of the park, in all the beauty of its spring freshness. A cage of canaries stood in one window, a pair of love-birds were located in another; altogether, though small, it was as bright and pretty a room as is often seen. Wilfred had ample time to examine it, for he was left alone for a considerable time.

One thing greatly surprised him, which was, to see no portrait of Hyacinth. Photographs abounded; two large colored ones were on the writing-table, one of Sir Lindsay, the other of Christian, and on various stands and small tables were displayed one of Sir Loudoun, two of Lady Tynedale, a small vignette of Christian, and three of Sir Lindsay in different attitudes, besides two of Mrs. Ettrick; but of Hyacinth there was no sign.

"Very strange," he thought, as he began to pace the tiny room, to the infinite peril of all the *bric-à-brac* therein displayed—"very strange not to have a portrait of the sister she

is so fond of. I suppose she keeps it up in her own room. Evidently the butler was indiscreet in admitting me. I am too early, and her ladyship doubtless thinks me an unspeakable bore; still, as I am here, I'd better stay, I suppose. What a fool I was to make so sure of finding Hyacinth here! If I'd only inquired last night, I might have been at Ettrick all right to-day."

Meanwhile, Wilfred's arrival had been duly notified to Hyacinth, who was up-stairs putting on her habit, and who, not hearing of his preliminary inquiry for Miss Ettrick, never doubted that he knew all about her marriage. Well, if he did, why should he have thought it necessary to come on the appointed day, on what he knew must be an unavailing errand? Still, though the meeting might be slightly awkward, it must come sooner or later, and there was certainly no reason for fear; still, the thought of encountering the man who, on their last meeting, had breathed such passionate love into her ear, made her very nervous, and caused the delay in her appearance that appeared to Wilfred so prolonged.

How would he greet her? What would he say? These were questions which she asked herself over and over again as she left her room, and slowly descended the stairs, closely attended by Scamp. She paused with her hand on the handle of the door. Why did her heart beat so fast and her cheeks burn so hotly? Why did the memory of that kiss, of which at the time she had been almost unconscious, come back to her now as it had never once done before? Why did the scent of hawthorn and lilac seem borne on the breeze to her senses, and the lapping of the water among the reeds to strike on her ears? Why, for the first time since she had thrust it into the drawer of her disused desk, did the recollection of the gold locket and of the turquoise ring, which Wilfred had taken in its stead, flash into her memory?

How long she might have stood at the door, engrossed with these and similar thoughts, we cannot say; but Scamp, unused to such proceedings, gave a sharp bark, which recalled her to herself, and she hurriedly opened it. Wilfred turned at the sound, and sprang forward in amazement.

"Hyacinth! Why, they told me you were at Ettrick!—what on earth did the fellow mean? How thankful I am I came in! I shouldn't, if there had been a chance of reaching

Ettrick to-night. Well, Hyacinth"—he took her hands, and pressed them closely—"I said I would come back to the day, and here I am. You have never been out of my thoughts since we parted a year ago in the Hyacinth Dell. It was a hard trial to stay away when I saw that your father had been taken from you, more especially as the same paper told me that Christian's wedding had taken place, as we anticipated. I thought how lonely you would be, Hyacinth, and I longed —heaven knows how I longed!—to come back to you; but I had promised to stay away a whole year, and I kept my word. And now, my own Bluebell, grown even bonnier than when I last saw you, have you no word of comfort for me? Hyacinth, say that I was right when I told you you would care for me—tell me that I may hope."

So he was in the dark!—he believed her free, and knew nothing of what had occurred! What should she say? How should she begin the work of enlightening him? She hesitated and blushed, until, releasing her hands, he was about to throw his arm round her, and assume the consent she had not given; then at length she found her tongue.

"Stop!" she exclaimed, starting back, and changing from red to white in a manner to him totally incomprehensible. "Mr. Lambert, you do not know—you evidently have not heard—I never expected to see you."

"Never expected to see me! Hyacinth, you *knew*—you *must* have known that I should come—that the hours were long to me till the time came when I could return to you with hope. Surely, Hyacinth, you knew this, and will give me the answer I long so to hear," and he advanced once more towards her.

"Don't—you don't know—I am married!" cried Hyacinth in desperation; the next moment she was aghast at the effect of her words. Wilfred staggered as if he had received a deadly blow, and turned white as he repeated the word "Married!" and sank into a chair.

"Yes," said Hyacinth, standing before him and speaking rapidly. "We were mistaken; Lindsay never cared for Christian—he was in love with me all the time. He told me so a week after you went away, and we were married in July. I never imagined your fancy for me would have lasted—but is it possible you never heard of my marriage?"

"Quite possible, indeed," returned Wilfred, in a voice so changed that Hyacinth again started. "You see, Hya—I beg pardon, I mean Lady Ettrick,—I knew that, if I remained within reach, you would prove a magnet infinitely too attractive for me to resist; so I went far away, and have been wandering in remote places, only longing for the time when I might come home. Papers seldom came in my way, and it was by the merest chance I saw the account of your father's funeral, and gathered from it that my predictions to you had been verified. When your servant told me that Miss Ettrick was in the country, I should have gone down to Elmshire at once, had I not known it was too late—that the last train of the day was gone. Forgive my intrusion—I am keeping you in;" and he rose to go.

"No, no, I can't let you go like this!" cried Hyacinth, to whose eyes the ready tears had sprung during his speech—"certainly not till you tell me you forgive me. You guessed my secret a year ago—you knew I loved Lindsay; can you wonder, when I found that he loved me, that I forgot everything, saving that I was the happiest woman in the whole world? I told you I should never love any one else, but you would not believe me."

Wilfred gave a groan.

"I hoped you would come back, having forgotten all about your feelings for me; but surely, now that you find that I have achieved the only one thing that could ever have made me happy, there is no reason why we should not be friends;" and she held out her hand.

He took it, and stood gazing earnestly into her eyes.

"Hyacinth," he said—"I must call you so for the last time—I promise that I will always, in future, remember your proper title,—you have little idea of the blow your loss is to me. Wherever I have been—in the city or in the wilderness, in the forests or in the plains,—you have been ever before my eyes; I have heard your voice in every murmur of the breeze—have seen you mirrored in every lake and stream. This ring"—and he pointed to the turquoise circlet on his left hand—"has never left my finger since the day you gave it to me. In fact, you are the only woman I ever loved, or ever shall love. I do not blame you, you could not have done otherwise; but I am the victim of a double mistake. First,

in believing that you cared for me, when your whole heart was given to your cousin; secondly, in believing that he was attached to your sister. I might have guessed that, knowing you, he could hardly care to win another; but hope blinded me. Friends? Yes, indeed; we could scarcely be less;" and he wrung her hand till she could scarcely repress an exclamation of pain.

How guilty she felt at the sight of the ring!—at the thought of her own utter obliviousness of the locket that had been given her in exchange!—but, at the same time, how she wished that that ring were safely back in her own possession! She could not ask him to give it her back, and yet she felt uncomfortable at the thought of anything which had been regarded by him in the guise of a love-token, belonging to any man but her husband. She hardly knew if she were glad or sorry that Lindsay knew nothing of Wilfred's proposal to her on the island; she had no wish to reveal a secret which she hardly regarded as her own, and yet she was far too honest and open-hearted not to dislike the idea of a mystery.

All this had never struck her before; she had been so occupied with Lindsay that, as we have said before, the thought of Wilfred had rarely, if ever, occurred to her. Now a sort of guilty feeling oppressed her, though why she could hardly tell. She certainly had done no wrong, except in at first misleading Wilfred as to her sentiments; and this had been done unwittingly. Still, there was a sense of sorrow—a sort of presentiment of ill—that clung to her, she knew not why.

Before long Wilfred took his leave, averring that, after such a shock, he longed to be alone; and shortly after his departure Hyacinth mounted Bay Charmer, and started for the park. Her musings were graver than they were wont to be, and her numerous friends scarcely found her so bright and cheerful a companion as usual. She had taken several turns, when, to her unspeakable surprise, she caught sight of Lindsay, who had gone out early, saying he was going to Prince's, riding with Mrs. Marsfield and her husband.

Was it wonderful that she should feel hurt? If Lindsay cared to ride at all, why could he not ride with her? she thought, bitterly. Ah! it showed that his love for her was waning! What had she done, that he should cease to care for her? What could she do to recall his love?

Now in reality Lindsay was very fond of his wife, and had no more intention of paining her, or of hurting her feelings, than he had of flying; but he invariably made himself the first object of life, and he was little likely to think of anything save his own amusement, or to deny himself the very slightest gratification; he had it not in him to consider others, when any pleasure of his own, no matter how small, was in question. He had gone out intending, as he had told his wife, to go and play rackets; but on his way to Hans Place he encountered Philip Marsfield, had strolled with him to Grosvenor Place, and finding Mrs. Marsfield just about to start for her ride, had acquiesced in her suggestion that he should mount her groom's horse and accompany them. So his appearance in the park was really quite unpremeditated; but of this, of course, Hyacinth was unaware, and felt considerably hurt, which feeling was not decreased by seeing him turn down Grosvenor Place with the Marsfields. It did not strike her that he was not riding his own horse, and that it was but natural that he should ride the animal home. She had hoped that he would join her, and return home with her, and was proportionately disappointed when he turned away.

How merry her laugh was that morning, and how frequent! She feared so much that any one should perceive that she was pained, and should blame Lindsay—Lindsay, who, in spite of her fear that he had ceased to love her as he had once done, was the one object of her adoration.

When a woman loves as truly and devotedly as did Hyacinth, it takes a vast amount of sorrow and neglect to open her eyes to the fact that her idol is unworthy of her devotion, or to make her comprehend that, although in his own way the man whom she adores really does love her, the merest trifle ministering to his amusement or pleasure is of infinitely more importance in his eyes than her feelings or happiness. It is long indeed before the loving eyes are opened. Happy are the women capable of prolonging their moral blindness, and believing forever in the affection and perfection of their lords. Happy indeed are they who can be amply satisfied by a careless endearment or occasional caress, and never give a thought to long days of loneliness, to months of carelessness and neglect. Happy are they indeed; to them the idol is still of purest gold, and the clay feet never become apparent.

But Hyacinth was little likely to be one of these enviable and placid individuals. She loved Lindsay with an affection too deep and strong to be utterly devoid of jealousy. She had, in the early days of their married life, erected him on a moral pedestal, and believed him to be everything highest, best, most high-minded; but this ideal had been more than once rudely shaken, even before their return to England; and his ill-temper on the day of their arrival at Ettrick, and objection to allowing her to give Christian her own diamonds in exchange for the heirlooms, had still more tended to convince her that, after all, he was but mortal, and, as such, possessed of failings like the rest of the human race.

It was a shock, no doubt,—women have the instinct of veneration strongly developed, and are ready and willing to worship their husbands, if only such reverence be possible,—but she did not dwell upon it. It was unpleasant, and she put it from her, and dwelt only on his love for her, and their happiness. It was not until his hasty speech, on her pressing him to go out with her, that the thought of doubting his affection ever occurred to her; but the thought having once presented itself, utterly refused to be banished, strive as she would. Then came her jealousy of his attentions to Mrs. Marsfield, which, having lain curiously dormant and unsuspected in her breast all through the winter at Knotlem, had blazed forth into unmistakable flame on her first realizing her own feelings in London. If Lindsay were so tired of her that he cared for some one else, he should see that she, too, could be indifferent, though, even as she so resolved, a sharp pang told her that she loved him far too well to feign indifference easily.

She mused on all this sitting over her solitary luncheon, and while one visitor after another came in for afternoon visits.

When she went out at four o'clock she felt but little inclined for shopping, or driving about card-leaving; she felt that something was required to give a turn to her painful thoughts, so she drove to Prince's, where she was tolerably certain of finding all the members of the set she most frequented.

A graceful *patineuse* on real ice, she had taken eagerly to the strange mania which has so completely changed the habits of fashionable London, rendering early rising an exciting pleasure, and severe exertion in tropical weather a refreshing pastime. Responding to numerous salutations, she passed

gracefully several times up and down the crowded rink, and suddenly found herself face to face with Wilfred Lambert. It was a decided surprise. On leaving her five hours before he had seemed so utterly depressed that his appearance in a crowded place of gay resort seemed somewhat incongruous, but his greeting was even more surprising than his appearance. He turned and joined Hyacinth, talked lightly of mutual friends and social matters, complimented her on her skating, described several *tours de force* which he had seen in America, and which he should be glad to communicate to her, and was as intimate and as *insouciant* as if he had met her every day of the season.

It was an immense relief to Hyacinth—it released her from the dread that she had made him terribly miserable and marred his life; but perhaps unacknowledged, nay, even unknown to herself, was a slight feeling of pique at his extremely rapid recovery. But this was, as we have said, undreamed of by herself, and she soon found herself greatly enjoying Wilfred's conversation, and reflecting that she was very glad he had returned, he was so much pleasanter than any other member of their acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How sleeps yon rock, whose half-day's bath is done,
With broad bright side beneath the broad bright sun,
Like sea-nymph tired, on cushioned mosses sleeping;
Yet, nearer drawn, beneath her purple tresses
From drooping brows we find her slowly weeping.
So many a wife for cruel man's caresses
Must inly pine and pine, yet outward bear
A gallant front to this world's gaudy glare."

The Tide Rock.

Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick dined alone that night, a somewhat unusual occurrence, and Hyacinth at once informed her husband of Wilfred Lambert's visit. She did not think herself justified in revealing his secret. Lindsay had never asked her whether Mr. Lambert had proposed to her; unless he did so now she had, she conceived, no right to reveal the

fact. She did, however, go very near the subject, for she said, "He was extremely surprised to see me. He expected to see Christian as Lady Ettrick."

But Lindsay was evidently not particularly attending; he said indeed that Wilfred had been away a long time, and wondered what fun he could have found in wandering about outlandish places; but Hyacinth was somewhat mortified to perceive that the relations formerly existing between her and Mr. Lambert had, to all appearance, entirely escaped his memory. She was piqued, and yet she was not sorry to escape the cross-questioning which would have obliged her to disclose a secret she did not consider her own. She had made a remark on her surprise at seeing Lindsay in the park, and his answer, conveying that his presence there had been totally unpremeditated, greatly soothed her; and she began to talk with her natural gayety of her adventures at Prince's that afternoon, and of all the new evolutions which Wilfred had been describing to her.

"Get him to teach you," observed Lindsay; "with your figure, if you try anything of that sort, you're sure to succeed, and you'll drive all the women wild with envy, which, I believe, is the highest object of a woman's ambition. And, oh! just make up a little dinner for—what day are we free? Tuesday? very well. Ask the Bellendens, and the Marsfields, and the Montacutes, Madge Vane and Lambert; it'll be a very good fit. Where are you going to-night?"

"Helen Tynedale has some early music. I do wish you would come."

"Not I; music's all very well, but I can't stand a stuffy room."

"It wouldn't be stuffy, and we could come away as soon as you liked."

"Have you nothing else? Oh! Yes, I forgot. Lady Marchton's dance—perhaps I'll meet you there," and Lindsay sauntered off, leaving his wife to dress with a heavy heart. He would not bore himself by going with her for a few minutes to their own cousin, but he would go to a dance in a tiny house, which was sure to be hot, crowded, and dull, because Lady Marchton was Mrs. Marsfield's chosen friend, and he would be pretty sure to meet her there. All the pleasure she had derived from finding he had not ridden with the Mars-

fields by appointment had already vanished—she was beginning to feel both neglected and aggrieved, and this feeling was far from being decreased when, on entering Lady Marchton's crowded rooms, the first object that met her eye was Lindsay sitting in the conservatory, at the end of the drawing-room, with Mrs. Marsfield, half hidden behind a stand of roses. She was loth, indeed, to allow to herself that Lindsay could do wrong, but it was a sore and bitter mortification to her, and to hide it she laughed and talked more gayly than was her wont, and people said, "How well Lady Ettrick was looking; what wild spirits she had!"

Presently Wilfred Lambert was at her side. Lady Marchton was one of the innumerable young ladies with whom he had fancied himself in love before he had met Hyacinth and learned what love really was, and having met her at Prince's that afternoon, he had received an invitation. Very soon he had persuaded Hyacinth that it was very hot, and was seated beside her in a cool and sequestered nook on the stairs, accepting her invitation to dinner for the ensuing Tuesday, and eagerly making arrangements for early meetings at Prince's, to teach her the evolutions she was bent on learning.

Though only half her attention was given to what he said, the other half being intently fixed upon any movement that might be made by either Lindsay or his companion, Hyacinth was conscious of a vague surprise at Wilfred's self-possession, and at his willingness to seek her society; she could not help recalling how, that very morning, he had staggered and turned white on learning that she was the wife of another. Could he have been acting? No, the start was too genuine, the ring of truth in his voice too unmistakable; she was inexpressibly glad he should have resigned himself so speedily, but—she could not help thinking it strange. But this affected indifference had a reason of which she, in her innocence, little dreamed.

Wilfred Lambert, as we have said, was a man naturally devoted to self-pleasing, and his education had not been such as to hamper him with any of the restraints of principle. With him, to wish for a thing was to possess it, if its attainment were within the bounds of possibility; it mattered not at what cost of pain, sorrow, or injury to others. He would not have injured any one willfully or needlessly, but if his best friend

stood between him and his wishes, he would have sacrificed him without a second thought. He loved Hyacinth as a passionate nature like his does love, when really stirred for absolutely the first time; his passion had grown and had gained depth and strength during his solitary wanderings, and the blow which had shattered his sanguine hopes, and revealed to him his longed for bride as the wife of another, had been severe and keenly felt. He had gone out from Hyacinth's presence that morning stunned and dazed, conscious of a weight of misery, yet hardly realizing the depth of his despair.

He had wandered on, not heeding where he was going, till he suddenly found himself in the full throng of Rotten Row, and before he could turn and escape, he had seen something that had filled his mind with a new train of ideas. He had seen Hyacinth's face of amazement and bitter jealousy on first catching sight of her husband riding at Mrs. Marsfield's side; he had also noticed Sir Lindsay's apparent devotion, and his companion's air of calm proprietorship.

Wilfred knew Mrs. Marsfield of old—nay, he had once worshiped at her shrine, and was well aware that she had few equals in the art of both taking and retaining captive the man she might select for the proud position of her domestic *attaché*. Surely here was an opportunity for him. Sir Lindsay was evidently ensnared, his wife as evidently bitterly jealous; why should it not be his task to console her?—why should he not?—but we need hardly pursue his thoughts further. Suffice it to say that they wrought the change in him that so surprised and yet relieved Hyacinth.

"And how did your hunting winter please you?" he asked, at length. "I shall never forget that it was the fox that proved my first introduction to you."

"Oh! I enjoyed the hunting of all things, and I really had a great deal."

"And you like Knotlem?"

"Yes"—the answer did not come so readily this time—Hyacinth was thinking that Knotlem was responsible for their intimacy with the Marsfields—"it is capitally situated for hunting. Do you know it?"

"I stayed for a fortnight once in the neighborhood, at Marsfield. Of course you know Lord Cottington?"

"Oh! yes; such a nice, courteous old gentleman."

"Were his son and his wife living there?" asked Wilfred, determined to make her speak of her rival. "Mrs. Marsfield is considered very handsome."

"Yes, they were at home," replied Hyacinth, in so constrained a manner that, without the information he had gained in the park, Wilfred would at once have guessed the state of the case; his companion was too guileless to be able to conceal her feelings. "I know people call Mrs. Marsfield handsome. I don't admire her style."

"Very naturally," thought Wilfred. "It is not often that women do admire their rivals. Bless me, how blind some men are! That Sir Lindsay, with this lovely, fresh treasure of his own at home, cannot be content, but must needs get himself entangled with a coarse woman like Laura Marsfield, who has no more cultivation of mind than—the cook! Well, his folly is my opportunity. It isn't my place to quarrel with his stupidity, only, if I were he, I should act pretty differently."

"Going, Lady Ettrick?—so soon? It is quite early."

"I am tired," replied Hyacinth, wearily. She had just seen Lindsay wish Mrs. Marsfield good-night, and take his departure. "And if I am to have this skating-lesson at half-past ten, I must have some rest. Are you quite sure it is not giving you a great deal of trouble?"

"Quite certain that it will be a great pleasure. I am sure you will catch the knack at once, and I shall be very proud of my pupil."

"So you're to have your first lesson this morning?" said Lindsay, at breakfast. "I've nothing to do this morning; I'll come and see how you get on."

Was he blind, that he did not see the flash of pleasure that illumined his wife's face at his words? Or, seeing it, is it possible he could disregard it? At any rate, she had the unwonted pleasure of his accompanying her, though whether Wilfred Lambert greatly appreciated his appearance on the scene may well be doubted. But once at Prince's, Hyacinth saw little more of him. He soon got tired of watching her instruction in the new American step, lounged about and talked to the few people he knew who were there at that early hour, disappeared for a game of rackets, and then sauntered up to his wife to say he was bored—it was slow so early, and he was going to Tattersall's.

"I'll come and sit in the park with you, if you like," said Hyacinth, with an alacrity by no means flattering to her painstaking instructor; "or, it isn't very late, we might ride."

No, Lindsay preferred to go his own way; and he answered pettishly that he had not asked her to come away—she was very well amused, and had better stay. Besides, had he not said he was going to Tattersall's, where he certainly could not take her.

Wilfred had discreetly found a friend out of ear-shot during this matrimonial colloquy, but when he rejoined Hyacinth, after Lindsay's departure, and saw the sad expression of her eyes, he could but marvel at the indifference of the man to whom she was so evidently devoted, and hated him for giving her pain, even while he blessed him for playing into his hands.

"It cannot last," he thought; "she must soon be disgusted at his neglect and open preference of another woman. She is proud, and a rival will touch her nearly. She will grow miserable and reckless, and then will be my opportunity."

If Hyacinth could only have had a glimpse of his thoughts, how she would have shrunk from his touch and banished him from her society; but we cannot, perhaps mercifully, see what is passing in the minds of our companions; and Wilfred's manner being quiet and perfectly deferential, Hyacinth found him a very pleasant companion—pleasanter, indeed, than any of her London friends. It was so pleasant to meet some one who knew Christian, and could talk about Ettrick and Elmshire news generally; though it was rather a trial when he accidentally observed that he wondered her sister was not with her.

"Christian does not care for London," she said, quickly.

And Wilfred said no more, perceiving that he had touched a jarring chord, which was indeed the case. Hyacinth had built castles in the air all the winter, of the delight it would be to have her sister to stay with her in London; and perhaps Lindsay was never so near losing his empire over her heart as when he absolutely refused to allow her to invite Christian.

"He had married one sister, not both—it would bore him to have any one staying in the house; and besides, Hyacinth knew very well that Christian was so odd and unconventional that she could not help doing something to disgrace them. No, after that meeting at Elmton" (of the particulars of which

the reader has yet to be informed), "he had made a vow that Christian should never have the opportunity of airing her oddities in London under *his* roof. They would go and stay at Ettrick sometimes: in the country, where she was known, it did not matter so much."

Hyacinth wept bitterly, and attempted some remonstrance, but without effect, save that of making her husband cross; and yet Lindsay had no intention in the world of being unkind, nor any idea that he was not conducting himself as an exemplary husband. He really loved Hyacinth very dearly, but that did not appear to him the very slightest reason why he should deviate one hair's breadth from the path that pleased him best, or should defer to her wishes in any detail that interfered, no matter how slightly, with his own amusement. She had her horses, carriages, and servants, and perfect liberty to go wherever she pleased and to make what friends she liked—what more could she require?

The idea of a fond heart yearning for a return of its overwhelming affection, would have been incomprehensible to him; he would probably have stigmatized it as romantic nonsense, fit for nothing but a novel. And it never occurred to him that honest-hearted, innocent, and unconscious of evil as his young wife was, it was yet a somewhat hazardous experiment to set one so utterly guileless and unaccustomed to the world and its ways afloat on such a troubled sea, without either the rudder of experience or the protection of her husband's presence. He forgot that, unlike the other young married women who were left by their natural protectors to follow unquestioned their own devices, she had had positively no experience of the world on which she found herself suddenly launched, and that her very ignorance of the ways of that world was very likely to place her in compromising predicaments. But he never gave a thought to all this; even if he had, he would probably have dismissed the idea as troublesome. "Oh! it was all right. Hyacinth was steady enough," and he would not have swerved a hair's breadth from his career of self-pleasing.

Steady Hyacinth certainly was—far more so than her high spirits ever induced people to give her credit for being. She cared more for one of Lindsay's smiles than she would have done for the collected worship of London, if such had been

laid at her feet; she would have been perfectly happy and contented to pass the rest of her life on a desert island alone with him, though she was very far from disliking either society, or all the amusements so natural to her age; but it was in the very depth of her affection that her danger lay.

Extremes meet—sugar will turn to vinegar, and slighted love to gall. Unconsciously, and in spite of her love for Lindsay, Hyacinth's feelings were growing very bitter, more especially when she saw the empire which Mrs. Marsfield evidently possessed and ostentatiously paraded over him. It was an ever-present trouble—a constant blister, that irritated and embittered every moment of her life.

In these sorrows the poor child had no one to whom to turn; the only really intimate friend she had, her cousin, Lady Tynedale, saw with regret that Sir Lindsay allowed his wife to go out invariably alone, but sets in London lie wide apart, and of his great intimacy with Mrs. Marsfield she had never even heard. Also, she was not a member of Prince's; she had no wish to risk the safety of her limbs, or to exhibit herself in ungainly attitudes to the gaze of the multitude; neither had she the least desire for a spot where meetings could be conveniently arranged, so as to seem accidental—any one she wished to see could be openly asked to Belgrave Square. Nor did she feel disposed to rave about its being "so charming to have tea under the trees;" she knew that such conditions were chiefly favorable to the liquid being half cold, and more than probably sprinkled with green flies. But by not frequenting this universal resort, she remained in ignorance of Wilfred Lambert's constant attendance upon Hyacinth—indeed, as she seldom cared to go to balls, she was quite unaware of his presence in London until, one day, in the middle of June, he came in when she was sitting with her cousin. His air of being perfectly at home at once struck her, and in a very short time she felt the repulsion with which he had inspired her on the night of the Ettrick ball revive.

Wilfred endeavored to outstay her, but she was determined to remain, and at length, perceiving her intention, he took leave, saying, as he did so, "We shall meet to-night," and receiving a smiling assent.

"I thought Mr. Lambert had gone to America," said Lady Tynedale, almost before the door had closed.

"Yes, but not for life," said Hyacinth, laughing.

"He seems on pretty intimate terms with you."

"Well, yes. Of course I know him better than any one else, and he is here a good deal. Besides, he is teaching me some new skating-steps. You can't think how envious people are! They can't make out the knack."

Lady Tynedale sat silent for a few moments, meditating how she should give her inexperienced young cousin a hint as to the imprudence of becoming too intimate with so young a man as Wilfred Lambert; but it was not easy to frame her warning so as to avoid the appearance of a lecture, and she was wise enough to know that more harm has been done in this world by so-called good advice than by almost any other means. But at last she said,—

"Hyacinth, I'm sure you won't be offended when I say I hope you don't have Mr. Lambert here very much when you are alone. I was struck by his appearing just now unannounced. You are too young and pretty to be careless, and I know Sir Lindsay is out a great deal. Forgive my saying this, but I know your early life renders you more inexperienced in the world's ways than you would otherwise be."

A month before, Hyacinth would have been in an agony of terror that she had done something improper in receiving Wilfred at all when she was alone; but, unfortunately, one night Lady Bellenden, one of the fastest young married women in London, had observed her watching Sir Lindsay and Mrs. Marsfield with her eyes full of tears, and had compassionated, although she could by no means comprehend her distress. However, she had given her the benefit of her wisdom and experience in the advice that, so long as she sat and looked tearfully at her husband, there was little chance of his returning to her. If she wanted to get him back, her best plan was to set up a flirtation of her own, the more violent the better. Even if it had not the desired effect, it would amuse her, and prevent her fretting.

And Hyacinth, who had as much comprehension of, and capacity for, flirtation—the deliberate, cold-blooded attraction, that is to say, of a member of the opposite sex, for the sake of vanity, or any motive other than love—as a child of four, listened eagerly to the worldly wisdom of a more experienced

woman, and, in her endeavor to pique Lindsay, was so cordial to Wilfred Lambert as to deceive him into the belief that he was beginning to make an impression on her heart. He would have been considerably mortified could he have seen how every fibre of it was wound round Lindsay, although, at times, in her misery and mortification, she almost persuaded herself that she hated him.

She had ventured once to say something of her feelings with regard to his constant attendance on Mrs. Marsfield, but he had cut her remonstrances very short. "He did not choose to be dictated to; he never interfered with her amusements, and she had no right to complain of his conduct. Very few men gave their wives so much of their company as he did;" and he left the room, leaving Hyacinth to weep bitterly over her folly in having spoken, but restoring her to happiness again in the evening by being in high good humor—as, indeed, he generally was when everything went smoothly, and in accordance with his wishes.

Lady Tynedale little knew the ordeal through which her young cousin was passing, although she was uneasy at Wilfred's unannounced entrance, and very angry with Sir Lindsay for leaving his inexperienced wife so entirely to her own devices. If she had known the long hours that Hyacinth and Wilfred passed in each other's society at Prince's, in Park Street, and at every ball and party, she would hardly have been satisfied with her cousin's answer.

"Oh, he is here a good deal; Lindsay likes to have him. They have been smoking in the library this afternoon, and talking over all their Ascot proceedings last week." Which was strictly true. Hyacinth was straightforward by nature, and, besides, she was too thoroughly indifferent to Wilfred to have invented any excuse for his appearance. She liked him to come; he talked pleasantly and amused her, and prevented her counting the hours till Lindsay appeared—but that was all; and her tone was so perfectly unconcerned that Lady Tynedale, always fearful of saying too much, changed the subject, and soon after took her leave.

Mrs. Ettrick had prolonged her visit into Devonshire considerably beyond the period originally fixed for her return. She had been deeply mortified at what had really been want of due thought on the part of Lindsay and Hyacinth, but

which she chose to magnify into an intentional affront offered her by her daughter-in-law. She returned to London, however, about the end of June, and, ever ready to take offense and imagine slights, was displeased not to find Lindsay and Hyacinth awaiting her in Chapel Street.

After resting herself, she set forth to see them, but received the intelligence that neither was at home, and was turning from the door, when a four-in-hand drove up, on the box of which she perceived Hyacinth. It was Wilfred Lambert's drag, and Mrs. Ettrick, who had not heard of his return to England, at once noticed on what intimate terms he appeared with his companion. She had not long, however, for observation; Sir Lindsay and his wife alighted, and Wilfred drove on to deposit Lady Bellenden and Mrs. Trevor, who were also members of the party.

It was not long before Mrs. Ettrick turned the conversation upon Mr. Lambert, and it was soon abundantly apparent to her that he was so constantly in Park Street as to be almost an inmate of the house. A few days' observation confirmed this impression, and, never cordially disposed towards Hyacinth, she also took grave exception to many of her proceedings. Herself incapable of ever understanding an extreme affection such as Hyacinth felt for Lindsay, she would have scoffed at the idea that half her daughter-in-law's restless craving for excitement was due to mortification at her husband's refusing to go out with her, and at his attention to another woman. She was quite inclined to agree with Lindsay that Hyacinth ought to think herself very fortunate in being able to follow her own devices undisturbed, and would have sneered at regrets which she could not comprehend. Not that Hyacinth was by any means likely to confide them to her. She had never had a cordial feeling towards Mrs. Ettrick, and although she did her best to like her for Lindsay's sake, the endeavor was far from being successful. But now, when her heart was aching, her eyes often full of tears, only dispersed by the loud laughter and incessant excitement of which Mrs. Ettrick chose to disapprove, her feelings were rapidly becoming those of active dislike.

The truth was that Mrs. Ettrick found it by no means convenient that Hyacinth should have established a society of her own, in which she had no part. She had intended that matters

should be very different; she had proposed to herself to lunch in Park Street, to make use of Hyacinth's Victoria in the afternoon, to dine with her son whenever he and his wife were at home, and to enjoy the advantage of being taken to all parties. But the reality was very different. Lindsay and Hyacinth went out soon after breakfast—she to Prince's, he either there or to his club, and unless certain that he would return to luncheon, she very often lunched with a friend. Then, as to dinner, Mrs. Ettrick soon found that, on the rare occasions when they did not dine out, small dinners were made up, utterly irrespective of her, while the parties to which Hyacinth chose to go were seldom those to which she was invited.

To do Hyacinth justice, she never made up a dinner-party without suggesting to Lindsay that they ought to ask his mother; but he had always just settled the matter in his mind, and generally told her not to be troublesome.

Mrs. Ettrick was scandalized, too, at the intimacy with Wilfred Lambert. In her young married days no one had ever evinced the slightest desire to become her *cavaliere servente*, and if not absolutely jealous of her daughter-in-law's superior powers of attraction, it was something very near akin to that feeling that made her regard the friendship with such a jaundiced eye. She was constantly throwing out hints and innuendoes, but they fell pointless. Hyacinth was too guileless to understand them, and Lindsay was thinking of something else.

At length, one morning, early in July, she chanced to find Lindsay alone, and heard that Hyacinth had a bad headache. and was still in bed.

"I don't wonder at her being knocked up," said Mrs. Ettrick, grimly; "when I was young, people never thought of racketing about like this. I wonder you allow it."

"Allow what?"

"Why, allow your wife to half kill herself skating at that disreputable Prince's,"—Mrs. Ettrick had failed to be elected a member, and ever after spoke of the club with stern reprehension—"and then going out all the afternoon, and dancing all night. Now, if you had but married Christian!"

"Hang Christian! she's crazy. I should have shut her up in a lunatic asylum by this time. I don't see that Bluebell

does any harm; she only does what all the other young women do."

"Then she has always got that Mr. Lambert dangling after her."

"Lambert?—well, what of that? he's a very good sort of fellow, and he taught her some skating dodge. She knows him better than any other man."

"You did not think him a 'very good sort of fellow' that time down at Ettrick, Lindsay."

"Well, no, because I was ass enough to be jealous of him. More fool I! any one might have seen with half an eye that Hyacinth was over head and ears in love with me."

"Well, I hope you mayn't have cause to be jealous again."

"What do you mean?" said Lindsay, now thoroughly roused. "I jealous again! jealous of Hyacinth! Mother, do you know what you are saying?"

"Perfectly; I am only warning you that a tame cat is rather a dangerous appendage at times. People are beginning to talk."

Now this statement was both true and false; it was true that it was beginning to be remarked that Mr. Lambert was literally Lady Ettrick's shadow, but it was false that any rumor of these remarks had reached Mrs. Ettrick's ears, so that the insinuation was as gratuitous an invention as if no whisper of poor Hyacinth's "flirtation" had ever been uttered. Lindsay colored angrily.

"Beginning to talk! A tame cat a dangerous appendage! Stuff! What imprudent thing has she been doing? I'll see about it to-morrow. She shall drop Lambert at once."

Mrs. Ettrick said no more, and her son, after luncheon, strolled down to his club. It was a hot afternoon, the room was empty, and very soon his study of the *Times* merged into blissful slumber. How long it lasted he never knew, but when he once more became conscious of what was passing around him he heard two men talking near him, and before he could move his own name arrested his attention.

"I wonder what Ettrick will do?"

"Do, my dear fellow, perhaps he'll never hear it. Trust Wild Hyacinth for keeping her own counsel."

"Well, but if it's such a secret as all that, how did you contrive to get hold of it?"

"Just stumbled into it. Was walking up Park Street to Mrs. Percy's, and was passing the Ettricks' door, when the drag drove up with only those two. I don't know if she was afraid of being seen, but she was down almost before it stopped. I wonder she didn't break her neck."

"What o'clock?"

"About a quarter to one, for I played whist here till after twelve."

"Well, Wild Hyacinth will be clever if she keeps the story dark. Lambert's always about her, isn't he?"

"Oh yes, has been all the season; old lover, I fancy."

"She's a pretty creature."

"Humph!—well, yes, but so wild—such tearing spirits one minute, and so gloomy the next. However, mind! I told you, but don't let it go further, I don't want to make mischief."

"Very well. Wild Hyacinth is safe for me, but you'll see it'll be all over London to-morrow. Of course you know Mab Trevor has gone off with Le Vergnier?"

"No, I hadn't heard it. What, that fellow at the Embassy?"

"No, his elder brother. I only heard a scrap of the story, —something about a Richmond dinner; I can't tell you any of the particulars."

"She was one of Wild Hyacinth's pals. Birds of a feather, you know,—we shall hear of her next," and the two young men left the room, where Sir Lindsay remained almost paralyzed. His Hyacinth, his Bluebell driving alone with Wilfred Lambert, at one in the morning! She to be known as Wild Hyacinth, a by-word in the club! Surely this must be some hideous nightmare! But no, he felt painfully aware that it was his waking ears that had heard the words. He never thought of doubting; he knew both the speakers, and that the man who testified to having seen Hyacinth in so equivocal a position knew her well, and was usually accurate in his statements. Why had not his mother warned him before? Why had she not saved him from disgrace? No thought of blaming himself for want of care occurred to him; Hyacinth, his mother, Wilfred Lambert,—all were to blame; he was but a victim. But as he walked rapidly homewards, every sound seemed to resolve itself into a reiterated cuckoo-cry of Wild Hyacinth! Wild Hyacinth!

CHAPTER XXV.

> "But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
> And hatred of her weakness blent with shame."
>
> *The Princess.*

It is time that we should return to Christian, whom we left somewhat discomposed by the behavior of some of the members of the Elmton deputation. She would not for worlds have confessed so much, but in her heart she was far from being prepossessed in favor of any member of the party, excepting, perhaps, the fair secretary, Miss Sophonisba. She had expected deputies of a higher class, and it was a rude shock to her susceptibilities to find such vulgar women as Mrs. Jonas and Mrs. Gardon placed on a level with her. She was beginning to experience the difference between equality in theory, a very grand and elevated sentiment, and equality in practice, a very uncomfortable and disturbing reality. But she would not allow this to herself; she told herself that she had been very foolish to expect deputies of a higher class from a small manufacturing town like Elmton. Really Dr. Barker seemed an intelligent woman, if only she had not such a shrill voice, and such a disagreeable nasal twang; and the secretary was quite pretty, and appeared ladylike.

But, on the whole, Christian did not look forward to her first committee night so much as she would naturally have expected, or as she would have done if she had not been favored with this introduction to some of the members.

Dire was Dr. Barker's wrath at the misbehavior of her colleagues. She congratulated herself much on having obtained possession of the check, fearing that Christian must necessarily be disgusted at such an exhibition; and was so occupied in expressing her opinion of the widows and of Mrs. Gardon, that Sophonisba fondly hoped that her flirtation with Lord Elmton had passed unnoticed. Such was far from being the case, as she found when the widows, who were maudlinly repentant, having been dropped at their respective residences, and Mrs. Gardon, partially sobered by terror, having been

confided to the keeping of her lord and master, she and Dr. Barker found themselves at home.

"I do think," said Dr. Barker, turning round upon her, as soon as their parlor door was closed behind them,—"I do think if ever there was an aggravating female in this world, it is you, Sophonisba Jinks. That you couldn't keep steady on such an occasion as this!"

"My! why, what ever have I done?" said Sophonisba, trying to look innocent.

"It's no use your pretending," replied Dr. Barker; "didn't I hear you giggling, and see you making eyes at that young lord, just like the silly goose you are?"

"I couldn't help answering him civilly," said Sophonisba, beginning to whimper.

"Civility needn't be flirting," snapped the other. "I tell you what it is, Sophonisba Jinks, the game's pretty near played out here. It'll be through Miss Ettrick if we can manage to hold on long enough to do us any good; and if to-day's work hasn't disgusted her, I'm surprised. With two women shouting, and one crying drunk, and the secretary flirting instead of minding her business, it's my belief we shall neither see nor hear more of her."

But in this Dr. Barker was mistaken. Very nervous and shy, and decidedly uncomfortable, Christian made her appearance punctually at the hour named for the committee, too devoted to what she believed to be the interests of the cause, to allow her personal disappointment in its exponents to weigh with her. An unusually large meeting had assembled in expectation of her visit, and the room in Wheeler Street was more than comfortably filled by members anxious to have the proud distinction of sitting at the same table as a real "county lady," although in profession they were all democrats of the deepest dye. She won herself golden opinions by the courtesy of her manner; but during the long solitary drive home again, she was forced to confess to herself that, unless this had been a mere formal meeting, only designed to introduce her to the other members, for all useful purpose she might as well have been at home. Literally nothing had been done. Christian was too sensible and clear-headed to believe that the cause could be much advanced by a number of women sitting round a table and hearing a letter read from Miss E. Washington

Bang, regretting that she must postpone her visit to Elmton till the middle of December, and then passing a resolution that they were very sorry to hear it, and a vote of thanks to the secretary for reading the letter. Yet this was literally all that had taken place, and, though by no means clear as to what she had anticipated, she was quite certain her expectations had been very different indeed from the reality.

"Well, Miss Ettrick, I hope the committee answered your anticipations," said Laurence Courtray, meeting her a few days afterwards.

Perhaps if it had been any one else, Christian would have stoutly maintained that it had done so; but she had gradually grown to confide in Laurence more than in any other person.

"Well," she said, slowly, "I can't say we did much; but I don't know—I rather fancy the meeting was more to introduce me as a new member than anything else."

"A bait to bring fish to the net," thought Laurence; but he only said, "Well, I shall be curious to hear your further experience. Is the day for the great lecture settled?"

"It is put off until the middle of December. But there is one on Thursday week, to be given by the secretary."

"Let me see—that was the young lady who flirted so with Elmton. Well, I shall go over and hear what she has to say."

"He is very candid-minded—he is quite willing to be convinced, if only the arguments are strong enough," thought Christian.

The provoking thing was that the arguments no longer seemed so overwhelming to herself as they used to appear. Without her knowledge, Laurence's remarks, which she had never been able to answer, had sunk deep into her heart, and had sorely undermined her belief in the cause. She believed herself to be as fully convinced as ever, but perhaps the greatest proof that she was not so, was the way in which she was constantly rehearsing the arguments to herself, and putting them in the most specious light. If she had had any one to whom to talk on the subject, she would probably have given utterance to opinions more pronounced and extravagant than she had ever done before, but it would hardly have been a proof that her convictions were deeper.

Miss Sophonisba's flow of language in her lecture was very

welcome to her—it gave her some high-sounding phrases in illustration of some of the more advanced doctrines, and she repeated them to herself with parrot-like iteration; but even thus they obtained infinitely less hold upon her imagination than they would have done some months before. She did not say to herself that she was awaking from her dream, and becoming disenchanted—nay, she was as yet sublimely ignorant that such was the case, and even more so that her interest in Laurence Courtray, and her anxiety as to what he might think, had a considerable effect upon her opinions. She had asked him what he thought of Miss Sophonisba's lecture, which he had duly attended; and he had merely replied that she was very eloquent, and had a singularly sweet voice.

It argued a considerable change in Christian that she did not regard his silence, as to the arguments which he had heard, as a proof that he had been convinced by them, but could not humble his masculine pride sufficiently to avow his conversion; but that his reticence rather caused her to doubt whether Miss Sophonisba's plausible arguments and flowing periods had been as really convincing as they appeared to be.

Her experiments with her laborers had brought much trouble and annoyance upon her, but they had had the good effect of shaking that belief in the infallibility of her own judgment so common to the young and inexperienced. She had not followed Lord Elmshire's advice, at once to acknowledge her error, and revert to the ordinary custom of the county respecting both wages and stoppages, but had followed the plan of compromise of which she had spoken to Laurence, and, as is apt to be the fate of compromises, her action had satisfied neither party.

The farmers, tenants, and neighboring land-owners, though thankful that Ettrick no longer presented the spectacle of a positive premium upon idleness, by wages being paid whether work was done or not, were much dissatisfied to find that the reduction of wages to the ordinary level, which would, they hoped, have been immediately consequent on Lord Elmshire's remonstrance, was not to take place till the first of March.

The Ettrick laborers, on the other hand, considered themselves bitterly aggrieved by the notice of the prospective reduction, and grumbled at the restitution of the old order of things, which compelled them to work for the wages they re-

ceived, as if it were a totally unheard-of and most oppressive law. Their behavior concerned Christian far more than did the annoyance of the farmers, which, although she was hardly able even yet to realize that it was not unreasonable, she could in some small degree comprehend. But that her own people, instead of recognizing her desire to improve their condition, should at once turn against her, and complain more than if she had never done anything for them at all, struck her as very hard. She had yet to learn the extreme rarity of gratitude; it seemed to her that though, in compliance with advice and with the almost universal demand of the county, she had changed her plans, and had given notice that wages must revert to their usual level in March, her people might be thankful to her for maintaining the higher rate throughout the winter, and thus enabling them to obtain many comforts otherwise beyond their reach.

Much as she had read about trades unions, she was very far indeed from fully comprehending their spirit, and fondly imagined that the delegates were actuated by the highest motives, and the deepest solicitude for the welfare of their poorer neighbors, instead of by the more sordid view of the amount of pay drawn weekly by themselves. She little guessed what a boon her action had been to them, and how rapidly the Union had spread since the agitators had been able to point to one proprietor mindful of the rights of labor, and to draw thence deductions damaging to all other land-owners.

But it was now her turn to be abused for going back from what she had once initiated, and she had the mortification of seeing her laborers pass her, as they had never done before, without touching their caps, and of hearing that they had, almost without exception, joined the Union.

Things remained in this far from comfortable state, and had by no means mended, when the day approached for Miss E. Washington Bang's lecture. This was to be a great occasion, and Dr. Barker, who was somewhat disappointed at Christian's adhesion having proved less attractive than she had anticipated, was gradually making up her mind that Elmton was, as she expressed it, "played out," and that the society must soon migrate to other quarters, and, rather looking upon it as the last scene before the fall of the curtain, was determined to spare no effort to secure it due *éclat*. It would be

well to retreat with flying colors, and all the emblems of triumph and success. So Miss Sophonisba was instructed to pen some unusually persuasive circulars, and the committee, with the exception of Miss Tibbs, who maintained a grim silence, almost recovered their unanimity in the excitement of directing them, and of looking forward to so large a meeting.

One thing disturbed Dr. Barker, and that was the demeanor of the secretary, who was constantly so *distrait* as to make the most serious and inconvenient blunders; but as she kept her more than ever under her own eye, she could imagine nothing that could account for such a state of things. She little dreamed of the blow that was preparing for her, and since she had effected the desired change of apartments with Miss Deakin, fondly believed that the volatile Sophonisba was safe from the temptation of easily-attained finery. Such, however, was very far indeed from being the case. Miss Jinks was becoming very weary of her *rôle* as championess of female emancipation.

At the ball to which she had gone surreptitiously, and which had been the first thing to damage the prosperity of the society in Elmton, she had met a young man, Henry White by name, the son of a rich manufacturer, who had been considerably attracted by her soft voice and blue eyes, and this first meeting had been followed by many more. Many a night, when Dr. Barker fondly believed her secretary to be placidly sleeping in the room above her own, Sophonisba, who had obtained possession of the latch-key formerly surreptitiously owned by Miss Deakin's "first hand," was walking by the river, with Henry White for her companion. Thanks to Dr. Barker's mistrust of the discretion of her young friend, and her consequent care never to let her out of her sight, the lovers could never meet until the Argus-eyed guardian had retired for the night; and it was, perhaps, thanks to the lateness of their rambles that they had remained undiscovered by the gossips of Elmton, who were usually tolerably lynx-eyed in such matters.

Mr. White was the eldest of the three sons of a wealthy manufacturer, but he knew his father too well to venture to tell him that he had engaged himself to the secretary of the Women's Emancipation Society, even though such engagement were tolerably fair proof that she had renounced the more advanced of its tenets. But he had a plan which seemed feasi-

ble. At Christmas he was to be sent to London, to take his place in the counting-house of an uncle for a year or two, to prepare him for the ultimate management of his father's business. He was to leave Elmton a few days before, and it was settled that, on the morning of his departure, Sophonisba should contrive to elude Dr. Barker's vigilance, should meet him at the station, and that they should be married on their arrival in London.

Under the circumstances, it was perhaps hardly wonderful that the treasurer should find her secretary remiss and *distrait*. When she was talking of circulars, Sophonisba was dreaming of her wedding-ring, and the correct announcement of Miss E. Washington Bang's lecture was greatly endangered by her perplexity how to elude her guardian for sufficiently long a period to enable her, first to order, and afterwards to try on, her wedding outfit. Her lover implored her not to run the risk, promising that everything she could possibly require should be bought immediately on their arrival in London; but Sophonisba's chief idea of the pleasure of matrimony was comprised in the wedding-clothes, and the delight of ordering herself smart and becoming finery was more than she could resist, despite the danger that Miss Deakin, her solemn adjurations to secrecy notwithstanding, might betray her.

The day fixed for the departure of the lovers was that succeeding the one named for the great lecture, and it may therefore be easily understood that, if there had been no one to manage matters but the secretary, the arrangements might have left much indeed to be desired. However, Dr. Barker had proved equal to the occasion, and when eight o'clock struck, on the important evening, she peeped through the half-open door of the committee's private room, and saw, to her exultation, that the huge town-hall was crammed to overflowing. She had quite decided that this would be her last public appearance in Elmton—that she and Miss Jinks would migrate to some other town, where the citizens' pockets had not yet been attacked, leaving the Elmton Society to die a natural death, under the auspices of any member of the committee who chose to take the lead. This night's receipts would prove a good reinforcement to the exchequer, and, altogether, her native town had served her well.

The committee mustered on the platform in great force,

Christian being put very prominently forward by Dr. Barker, who was determined that this, her last appearance, should be made with all possible *éclat*. It would be very useful in her new hunting-grounds to appeal to the flourishing state of the society she had established at Elmton, and to the support which it had received from the landed gentry, generally supposed to be not too favorable to the introduction of novelties.

If this had not been marked out as the last scene of her Elmton career, Dr. Barker would hardly have ventured on the step of bringing forward so advanced a champion of the rights of women as was Miss Eliza Washington Bang. Christian was much startled, on being introduced to her before the proceedings commenced, to find her attired in a more uncompromisingly Bloomer style than any one she had yet seen; and the lecture had proceeded but a short time before she grew more uncomfortable than, in such company, she would have believed it possible that she could ever be. All Christian's woman's emancipation follies proceeded from having lived much alone, and from having read speeches and pamphlets whereof, having no one to demonstrate to her the fallibility of the arguments, she had accepted the theories, no matter how wild, as gospel. Despite all the nonsense which she was capable of talking on the subject, her absurdities really were but skin-deep, and she was as modest and as good-hearted a girl as it was possible to find.

Naturally, to such a disposition, Miss Bang's utterances were a rude awakening. The lecturer used decidedly nervous English, and was prevented by no feelings of delicacy from approaching topics which made one, at least, of her audience devoutly wish that the floor would open and swallow her up—that anything, in short, would happen, to cover her confusion. She was agonizingly conscious of Laurence Courtray's and Lord Elmton's presence in the front row of reserved seats, and though, with some feeling of what she must be suffering, they carefully avoided looking in her direction, still their presence was an additional misery to her.

Far be it from us to reproduce the substance of Miss Washington Bang's remarks; suffice it to say that, besides dwelling lengthily on the advantages to be derived from proclaiming marriage to be a civil contract, terminable at the pleasure of either of the parties, and touching on incidental topics that

caused every respectable woman present to wish herself at home, and produced a storm of hisses from the male portion of the audience, she proceeded calmly to announce her disbelief in the Bible, giving, as a reason, that it sanctioned the assumption of the inferiority of women, and that, this being opposed to common sense, it was time to give up listening to old wives' fables, and to look at things as they really were, instead of as the priests of the Middle Ages had chosen to represent them.

Miss E. Washington Bang had often found this reference to mediæval priests as the authors of the Bible very telling in her lectures in remote states, where tall talk and clap-trap were duly appreciated; but she was new to Great Britain, and little knew how to gauge the temper of an English audience.

Dr. Barker, who was better informed, grew momentarily more uneasy. Such members of the committee as possessed the power of comprehending what the lecturer was talking about, looked at each other in blank dismay, and at length, on a second reference being made to the Bible as a "played-out sham," there was a storm of groans and hisses that completely drowned the lecturer's voice.

"I thought this was a free country," remarked Miss Bang, contemptuously, when the uproar had somewhat subsided—"at least, so you always say; but if it comes to this, that a lady can't come forward on a platform, express her opinions on the state of society, and awaken the women of England to a sense of their degraded condition, all I can say is that this old country is a more one-horse affair than I could have believed possible, and that the women are worse off than the slaves in Kentucky before the American war."

A moment's pause, then an angry roar, and the whole male portion of the audience seemed to surge towards the platform. Quick as thought, Laurence sprang forward, drew Christian's arm within his own, and endeavored to pass into the committee-room, but it was hopeless; so many of the committee were endeavoring to avail themselves of that mode of escape that the door was unapproachable.

"Stand here," he said, pushing her gently into a sheltered corner—"don't be frightened, Miss Ettrick; no one shall hurt you," and he placed himself in front of her, nearly concealing her.

The uproar was fast degenerating into a species of free fight. At the first symptom of an attack on the platform, the lecturer, treasurer, and secretary had vanished, so that the mob found no one on whom to vent their wrath but their own female belongings, until one of the party, having penetrated into the committee-room, seized on the box containing the money taken that night at the doors, and which Dr. Barker, in the hurry of her flight, had left behind her. Returning with this prize, a difference of opinion became at once apparent. Some were for returning to every one the money they had paid, others for dividing it among those first on the platform, having themselves led the van. Naturally the dispute waxed warm; the original object of the attack on the platform was forgotten, the committee had time to escape, frightened out of the few wits they possessed, and the battle raged around the captured money-box. Chairs and tables were broken to pieces, and flew about in a promiscuous manner, very perilous to bystanders.

Lord Elmton, who had joined Laurence in forming a rampart before Christian, was struck on the forehead by a chair-leg aimed at some one else, and although the wound was not serious, still the sight of the blood put the finishing touch to her discomfiture, and she fell forward fainting. Laurence was in time to catch her, and, the fray having for the moment passed to the other side of the platform, he managed to achieve retreat into the small room, and to lock the door.

Lord Elmton, who had made good his escape with them, went to reconnoitre, and soon returned with some water, with which they revived Christian, and with the welcome tidings that the carriage was in readiness; for her servants, hearing of the uproar, had had the discretion to bring the means of escape without waiting for orders. Christian rose at once, but trembled to such a degree that Laurence at once decided she was not fit to be left alone.

"We must go home with her," he said to Lord Elmton; "she is in no state to be left to drive ten miles by herself."

Lord Elmton grumbled a little, but gave way; he was very good-natured, and, though heartily disgusted with the whole proceeding, agreed that it was impossible to leave a lady in the lurch; so, having directed his dog-cart to follow them to Ettrick, they started with Christian.

It was a very silent drive. Lord Elmton was soon fast asleep; Christian was too shaken and overcome to speak, but lay back in her corner and cried quietly; while Laurence judged wisely that, under the circumstances, the greatest kindness he could do her was to keep silence. He guessed that, besides the fright she had sustained, she was suffering deep mortification at finding to what her theories led when pushed to their extremity, and enduring agonies of shame at having been on the platform when subjects such as Miss Bang had handled had been referred to.

It was certainly a rude lesson, but he believed it would be a salutary one, and would deal a death-blow to any further longing for intercourse with the Shrieking Sisterhood. It would be long, he thought, before she would be able to look back without a shudder on the sufferings of that evening, and perhaps the discovery that terror and the sight of blood had caused her to faint, as naturally as any woman who was innocent of the slightest aspirations after her "rights" could have done, might prove to her that after all the sexes were hardly so precisely identical as she had fondly believed them to be.

For a man who was not in love, who was only rejoicing at seeing a noble nature saved from further folly, Laurence certainly took a strong interest in the result of the evening's adventures, but he was himself profoundly unconscious that his heart was interested in the matter. He had not expected her to speak at all that night, but, as they turned into the lodge at Ettrick, she said, with an evident effort, and in a very low and tremulous voice,—

"Mr. Courtray, thank you very much for all you have done for me. You were right, and I was wrong; it seems to me I always have been, but I shall not be likely to despise kindly offered advice again."

They reached the house before Laurence could reply, and he felt that perhaps this was as well, for there was nothing to be said that would not have recalled the events of the evening, which in her evidently nervous state was best avoided, so, as he wished her good-night, he only expressed a hope that she would be quite herself again the next morning, and in a few minutes he and Lord Elmton were driving homewards in the dog-cart.

They both agreed to say as little as might be about the lec-

ture and its results, for Christian's sake, but their reticence was of but small avail. Such an event was a perfect godsend in the quiet county town, and the radical paper, the *Elmton Banner*, gave the lecture almost verbatim, commenting in terms of enthusiasm on the crowded state of the meeting, the large numbers of the committee, and putting Christian's name most prominently forward, as one of the chief supporters of the movement. "A slight misunderstanding of one of the talented lecturer's remarks gave rise to some excitement, which was, however, speedily subdued," was the somewhat surprising manner in which the riot was alone described.

The conservative organ, on the contrary, the *Blue Rosette*, after two columns of fierce denunciation of the utterances of the speaker, and collaterally of the objects of the society, gave an account of the disturbance, so highly colored that it might, without much impropriety, have found a place in the record of the storming of a town; and drew a vivid picture of Lord Elmton "streaming with blood," as "he gallantly endeavored to protect a member of the committee from the fury of the populace."

In an article on the same subject, this lady was mentioned by name as Miss Ettrick, and many strictures were passed upon her want of feminine feeling in being present on such an occasion, while pointed allusions were made to the feud which her proceedings had served to create between employers and employed in a hitherto peaceful county.

December not being a month specially prolific in interesting news, several of the London papers took up and commented on the matter, and in this way it reached Sir Lindsay's ears.

Wishing to know the whole story, he at once procured the Elmton papers, and on reading their accounts, made up his mind that, happen what might, Christian should not spend the London season under his roof; he would not risk the possibility of her compromising either himself or Hyacinth by her insanity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Let this great maxim be my virtue's guide—
In part she is to blame that has been tried:
He comes too near that comes to be denied."
The Lady's Resolve.

WHILE Mrs. Ettrick was animadverting on her conduct in the drawing-room, and while Lindsay was listening to such strange revelations at his club, Hyacinth was passing anything but a happy day. Her plea of headache was no invention—her temples throbbed until at times she almost lost the power of reflection; but she was in a state of mental disturbance far more distressing than could be any mere bodily pain.

On the previous day she and Sir Lindsay had gone to a garden-party at Fulham, driving down on Wilfred Lambert's drag, in company with Sir Charles and Lady Bellenden, Mr. and Mrs. Trevor, and Monsieur Le Vergnier. Mr. and Mrs. Marsfield were among the first people they encountered on their arrival, and Hyacinth, having watched with jealous eyes her husband's immediate appropriation by that lady, and having seen them saunter to the river and get into a boat, felt little disposed to mingle in the gay scene before her, and to talk merrily with ordinary acquaintances; and was easily persuaded by Wilfred to sit with him under the welcome shelter of the spreading cedars. He had noted the expression of her countenance when Mrs. Marsfield appropriated Sir Lindsay, and read in it strong confirmation of his own hopes. Her jealousy once fairly aroused, it surely could not be difficult so work upon it as to secure the success of his own plans.

He did not calculate on the depth of the overwhelming affection that, in spite of his neglect, and her jealousy of his attention to another woman, Hyacinth felt for her husband. Indeed, she hardly was aware of it herself, for there were times when, something having annoyed him, he made some specially unkind speech, or openly preferred some whim of Mrs. Marsfield's to her comfort or pleasure, and she really felt as if she hated him, as if he had killed the love which had at one time been so excessive.

Something of this Wilfred guessed, but it did not enter into his calculations that the love was there as strong as ever, and was only obscured for the time. It seemed to him that an attractive woman like Hyacinth, neglected, and left entirely to her own devices during the very first year of her married life, while her husband openly amused himself with another woman, must necessarily be too hurt and mortified to preserve the least affection for him.

He drew favorable auguries, too, from Hyacinth's manner towards himself, little dreaming that the sole secret of her preference for his society lay in the two facts of her knowing him better than any one else, and of her being able to talk to him about Christian. Anxious to please her, he naturally assumed a very different tone in talking of her sister's views, and of the Elmton society and its final collapse, from that adopted by Lindsay, or indeed from that which would have expressed his own real opinions.

But Hyacinth did not guess this, and talked of Christian with a persistence which often bored her listener, who longed unspeakably to introduce more interesting topics. Still, he hardly dared yet to risk a word that might enlighten his intended victim as to his purpose—it would be wiser, he thought, to curb his impatience, and to wait yet a little longer—perhaps in August, at Glen Ettrick, where Sir Lindsay had invited him for shooting, and where, as he was aware, although Hyacinth was not, Mr. and Mrs. Marsfield were also expected, matters might have so far progressed as to give him his opportunity.

If Hyacinth could but have guessed his thoughts! Ah! from how many dangers should we not all be saved if we could but read the secret hearts of those with whom we are brought in contact!

Lady Ettrick had almost forgotten that Wilfred Lambert had ever been her suitor—if she ever by chance remembered it, she congratulated herself on the equanimity with which he had endured the discovery that she was separated from him forever by an impassable barrier. It had at first rather surprised her, but she had long since forgotten to think about it, and was only glad to have such an unfailing escort whenever Lindsay was, as was generally the case, pursuing his own amusements.

And so the result was that she and Mr. Lambert were almost inseparable—at Prince's, in Rotten Row, at all the balls and parties which she attended; besides which, Wilfred was generally the person suggested by Lindsay to make up the number of a dinner-party, and his drag, on which Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick were constantly to be seen, formed another means of frequent intercourse. It was by no will or wish of Hyacinth's. She would rather have spent the evening alone with Lindsay than have gone to the gayest ball without him, much as she, young and courted, naturally enjoyed such entertainments; but she had early discovered that staying at home meant spending hour after hour alone, while her husband was amusing himself at the club, or with Mrs. Marsfield, or elsewhere; and she naturally enough drifted into the habit of going out alone in search of excitement, that might enable her, if but for a short time, to forget her sorrow and mortification at Lindsay's indifference.

If she had gone out more in the set to which Lady Tynedale belonged, that lady would have soon descried the danger of Wilfred Lambert's constant companionship, would have warned her young cousin of her peril, and have taken her under her watchful guardianship; but sets in London are wide apart: Lindsay's friends chiefly belonged to the fast set, and into it Hyacinth, having no experience to guide her, gradually drifted. In that set it was so much a matter of course that every young married woman should go out without her husband, and should have an *attaché* who met her everywhere, that Lady Ettrick's proceedings excited no remark, and Lady Tynedale had had no notion of any such intimacy, until she had been startled by Wilfred's unannounced appearance in her cousin's drawing-room. But Hyacinth's evident indifference had reassured her, and she had thought no more of the subject, excepting, indeed, to wish, as she had often done before, that Lindsay would devote himself rather more to his wife, instead of following the bad example of the majority of the young married men of the day.

Hyacinth sat under the cedars for a considerable time, talking to such of her acquaintance as strolled in her direction, but mainly dependent for companionship upon Wilfred, who never once left her side. He was annoyed to see how constantly her eyes turned towards the landing-place, but was

careful not to betray his vexation, which was increased by seeing the flash of joy that lit up his companion's face when at length the looked-for boat touched the shore, and Lindsay, leaving Mrs. Marsfield to talk to some friends, strolled towards his wife. But the satisfaction was destined to be but short-lived.

"I say, Hyacinth," observed her husband, carelessly, "we're not engaged to dine anywhere to-night, are we? Ah! I thought not," as she shook her head. "Then I shall dine with the Marsfields. Haughton has thrown them over, and they want a man to fill his place. I'm going back with them now."

Why could not Mrs. Marsfield have asked some one of the many men assembled on that lawn, instead of taking possession of her husband? was Hyacinth's bitter thought, but she said nothing, and Lindsay continued,—

"I'm quite sorry to miss the drive home, Lambert. Take care of my wife, will you? It'll be very pleasant in the cool of the evening."

Then, turning to his wife,—

"I suppose you'll go to Mrs. Percy's? I doubt if I shall. I shan't get away from Grosvenor Place till late, and shall go to the club."

Hyacinth merely replied that she should probably go to Mrs. Percy's. She was too much hurt at her husband's unceremonious defection, especially coming after an afternoon spent entirely in the company of her detested rival, to make any remark on his proposed movements. Lindsay moved away, and the pair under the cedar sat silent for a time, Hyacinth reflecting bitterly upon how little her husband cared for her society, and how different her life was from what she had fondly hoped that it would be; Wilfred considering how amiably Sir Lindsay was playing into his hands.

But even while rejoicing for his own sake, he could not help a feeling of strong indignation at Sir Lindsay's conduct. As if such a wife should not be amply sufficient to content any man, and to prevent his even dreaming of following "wandering fires." Ah! when the prize was his, how far, far differently would he show his appreciation of its possession!

He had fallen into the same mistake as Hyacinth, in believing that Sir Lindsay really cared for Mrs. Marsfield, whereas it was in truth only his vanity that was touched. All the

heart he had was Hyacinth's, but that by no means prevented his caring infinitely more for his own pleasure and amusement than for her wishes.

The *tête-à-tête* was presently interrupted by Lady Bellenden, who came to announce her defection from the party on the drag.

"Mrs. Feartherston (the hostess) had pressed her and Sir Charles to stay and dine at the Villa; the Vanes were going to stay too, and would take them home. So many thanks to Mr. Lambert for bringing them down; it had been delightful; she was only so sorry to miss the drive home; they should meet at Mrs. Percy's;" and Lady Bellenden floated away to a group at a little distance.

"Our party is diminishing rapidly," said Wilfred. "Lady Ettrick, what do you say to driving on to Richmond, and dining there? I know the Trevors have no engagement, and you would be in plenty of time for Mrs. Percy's dance. It would be much pleasanter at Richmond than in London this hot night, and the drive home will be simply heavenly."

Hyacinth languidly consented. What did it signify when she returned home? There was no one awaiting her; it would be pleasanter to have companions, and be made to laugh and talk, than to sit alone picturing Lindsay seated at Mrs. Marsfield's side. Besides, Richmond was new; she had never dined there, and had always heard of it as more than commonly pleasant. "It is almost time we should be starting, then," said Wilfred, when she had consented; "don't trouble yourself to move yet, Lady Ettrick; I'll go and find the Trevors, and see if they have any objection."

But "the Trevors" were no longer plural. Mr. Trevor, it appeared, was engaged to a bachelor dinner in London, and had set off to walk home, being unspeakably bored by the fête; so Mrs. Trevor and Monsieur Le Vergnier were the only remaining members of the original party, and both willingly acceded to the Richmond proposal. Before very long they had bid farewell to Mrs. Featherston, and were on their way to Richmond, Hyacinth, as usual, on the box, the other couple having eyes but for each other, and whispering in tones inaudible to other ears. So far as Hyacinth and Wilfred were concerned, the drive was a very silent one, and it was not till the view from Richmond Hill first burst upon

her gaze that she exhibited any of her usual vivacity. But from that moment she was the life of the party; she talked and laughed as if free from comprehension of the meaning of care. Wilfred had hardly ever seen her so brilliant as she was during dinner, and though her laughter had something of an hysterical ring, it was not displeasing to his ear—he knew that these wild spirits were only produced by a wish to conceal her sorrow and mortification at her husband's neglect, and in that sorrow lay his only hope of winning the prize without which his life would, as he told himself, be flat and utterly unprofitable.

After dinner they strolled out into the park, agreeing to meet at ten o'clock for the drive home, and there is little need to specify how the quartette was divided. Once or twice, during that stroll, Wilfred was on the point of putting his fortune to the touch; as often he paused, doubting whether the time were as yet fully ripe, and some light jest of Hyacinth's made him rejoice that he had done so. About a quarter before ten they returned to the "Star and Garter." Hyacinth went up-stairs for her shawl, and at ten the drag came round, but there was no sign of Monsieur Le Vergnier or of Mrs. Trevor. Half an hour passed, eleven o'clock, half-past eleven, and then a note was brought to Hyacinth, which had been found in the room where the ladies had taken off their hats.

"Dear Lady Ettrick,—Don't wait; we have gone to London by train.—MABEL TREVOR."

"How strange!" exclaimed Hyacinth, who accepted the note as meaning precisely what it contained; "why, they were both talking all the evening of how they were looking forward to driving home by moonlight!"

"Well, at any rate we need not wait any longer," said Wilfred, who, less guileless than his companion, guessed pretty accurately what had occurred, and that Mabel Trevor had sunk forever beneath the dark waters; "the leaders are rather fidgety with being kept standing so long."

It was a glorious summer night, still and warm, the roses of the gardens they passed loading the air with their fragrance, and the moonlight rendering every object almost as distinct as it would have been by day. A perilous time for a man with Wilfred Lambert's hot, passionate temperament to be driving

through the stillness with the woman he adored so wildly, alone beside him. And to precipitate the catastrophe and increase the peril, Hyacinth's wild spirits had vanished, and the little she said was soft, gentle, and—bewitching.

How it came to pass he never exactly knew, what word of hers impelled him to take the final plunge he could never afterwards remember, but before he fairly knew what he was doing, Wilfred Lambert found himself pouring words of burning love into Hyacinth Ettrick's ear, pointing out to her how little she was appreciated by the man whom, in the inexperience of her youth, she had preferred to him, urging her not to throw away the happiness of her life, praying her to follow her friend Mrs. Trevor's example, and to fly with him, vowing to worship her forever as never yet was woman worshiped, to shield her from every breath of calumny and reproach.

He spoke fervently, as he felt; his whole soul seemed to well forth in the impassioned words that poured from his lips. He was fully engaged in the venture now, and impressed with the certainty that his pleading must be successful, and on this hopeful frame of mind there suddenly fell words cold as snowflakes on red-hot iron.

"Mr. Lambert, you utterly forget to whom you are speaking. Besides, no *gentleman* would take advantage of the fact that a lady was accidentally in his power and defenseless. Be good enough not to speak to me again."

It was a thorough rebuff, and one for which Wilfred was little prepared. He had made so sure of success, had so little given his companion credit for having the power, even if she possessed the will, so completely to snub him. He was foiled for the moment, but his admiration was increased tenfold, his passion raised to fever-heat, and as he drove silently and rapidly home, he vowed with a desperate oath that Hyacinth Ettrick should yet be his.

Without a word when they reached her own door Hyacinth sprang from the box, almost before the drag had stopped, and the door was hardly closed behind her when she fell forward in a swoon. Her nerves had been too severely tried, and relaxed the instant that the necessity for outward calmness was over. The butler summoned her maid, and she was carried to her room, and, as soon as consciousness returned, murmured something about the heat and over-fatigue.

Through the whole night sleep never visited her eyes; she lay wide awake revolving in her mind all that had happened. Now that the catastrophe had occurred, that the words had been spoken of which even in the darkness she could not think without turning hot and cold, and shivering as if in an ague-fit, many things became apparent to her which had never been so before. She saw the reason why Wilfred Lambert had so quickly reconciled himself to her being the wife of another; he had even then flattered himself that he would be able to win her. Helen Tynedale had been right when she had warned her of the perils of too great intimacy, when she had seen Wilfred Lambert walk unannounced into the Park Street drawing-room. Would that she had paid attention to her words! But of such danger she had had no more conception than a child. That any man should have dared to speak to her, a happy—well, no, perhaps hardly that—but a true and loving wife—as Wilfred had done, seemed to her absolutely incredible; she almost felt as if it must be a hideous dream, from which she should presently awake, to find everything in the same state in which it had been the day before.

But no, there was a terrible reality about her disturbance that forbade such comforting solution. And then, as an additional horror, was the knowledge that Mrs. Trevor, who but the day before had been the gayest of the gay, the very life of their set, had been drawn down into the whirlpool of destruction—that her face would be seen no more among them. And she had been her friend, in the light way, at least, which the world considers friendship; doubtless Mr. Lambert had imagined that they were kindred spirits—he had evidently believed her ready to follow her friend to perdition.

Many and bitter were the tears she shed in the watches of the night over her own folly and blindness, which had rendered it possible for any one so to insult her; but much as she reproached herself, she could not help an occasional thought that Lindsay, too, was somewhat to blame. If he had not so entirely neglected and left her to herself, Mr. Lambert would never have had the opportunity of becoming so intimate with, or so necessary to, her.

Looking back on the six weeks that had elapsed since the 16th of May, she sighed bitterly to think how much more she had seen of him than she had of her husband. All the

early mornings they had spent together at Prince's, or else he had ridden with her in the park; the afternoon had generally seen him in Park Street, nominally to see Sir Lindsay, really to sit with his wife; then later had come Prince's again, perhaps a meeting at dinner, certainly an evening spent in each other's society at ball or party. And she had seen her husband at breakfast—occasionally at luncheon—at dinner, but almost invariably in the company of others, and at various times at parties or at the skating-rink. What a difference! And, as she mused bitterly, probably his time had been as much spent with Mrs. Marsfield as Wilfred Lambert's had been with her. In this she was, however, mistaken; Lindsay's heart, as we have said, was really in his wife's possession, and his attraction to Mrs. Marsfield, as a woman who flattered his vanity by her evident preference for his society, and who amused, while at the same time she saved him all trouble, was a vastly different feeling from Wilfred's passionate worship of Hyacinth. This, of course, however, Hyacinth could not know; she only knew that her husband left her almost entirely alone, and that, whenever she saw him in society, he was at Mrs. Marsfield's side; it was not unnatural that she should imagine that he was with her a great deal more than even was the case.

Such musings were not conducive to repose, and in the morning her head ached so violently that she was unable to rise. Sir Lindsay, who had not come in till three o'clock, remarked carelessly that he supposed it was the heat of the day before—she had better lie still and go to sleep, no doubt she would be all right by dinner-time; and went down-stairs, having asked no question as to how she had got home—whether she had been to Mrs. Percy's, or, indeed, any other particular. Nothing she did had any interest for him, Hyacinth thought to herself with bitter tears as he left the room; but here she did him injustice—it was carelessness, not indifference, that made him ask no questions; he took it for granted that she had pleased herself, was very glad she should do so, and devoted his thoughts to his own amusements.

During the weary hours that she lay on the sofa in her darkened room, Hyacinth thought long and earnestly what she had better do. Wilfred was to have dined with them

that very night, a small party of eight; surely, surely now he would not come?

But Lindsay was sure to remark upon the sudden and utter cessation of their intimacy. What cause should she assign? She shrunk from telling him all that had occurred; it seemed as if the burning words that had been poured into her astonished ears would sear her lips, if she did but attempt to reproduce them. Still he must hear something—unless, indeed, Wilfred left London. Surely it was strange that she had not thought of that before. He must naturally wish to avoid her as much as she desired never again to behold him. Doubtless he would go abroad, and then the occurrences of that July night might gradually come only to be remembered as a horrible nightmare; and, comforting herself in this wise, exhausted nature asserted itself, and Hyacinth gradually fell into a deep sleep.

Perhaps astonishment had been Wilfred Lambert's prevailing feeling at the unmistakable rebuff he had met with. He had indeed hardly expected to succeed at once—that is to say, he had not contemplated that Hyacinth would be so easily won as to consent at once to all he asked. He had anticipated that she would have been startled and shocked, would have told him that he was very wicked, and must never, no, never speak to her again in such a manner—that she would, in short, have assumed a becoming and delicious anger, and have been easily appeased by a few penitent speeches, which would have left him free to try his fate again on the first opportunity. It was a startling blow therefore to find Hyacinth so cold, so self-possessed, so determined to allow him no opportunity of mollifying her wrath, or of pleading for gentle judgment in consequence of extenuating circumstances.

Perhaps nothing could have been so calculated to inflame his passion as such a reception of his suit. Pacing up and down his room that night, he swore to himself over and over again that Hyacinth Ettrick must and should be his—that love, devotion, adoration such as his could never be thrown away; but that, disgusted with her husband's neglect and manifest preference for another woman (for, like Hyacinth, he believed Lindsay to be really fascinated), she must before long succumb to his entreaties and reward his devotion.

Meanwhile, the line of conduct which it would be wisest to pursue rather puzzled him. Hyacinth had so completely disturbed his calculations that he really hardly knew what to think respecting her. Was it probable that she would tell her husband what had occurred? Surely it was hardly likely, for, being guilty of gross negligence himself, he was certain to blame her. No, she would keep her own counsel, and, under such circumstances, what would it be wisest for him to do? To go on as usual, ignoring, if she would let him, all that had occurred, trusting to constant intercourse to familiarize her with the idea that had at first so startled her, would certainly be the pleasanter course, for the hours not passed in her society seemed ages to him; but perhaps to go away for a time, and leave her to discover by experience how much she missed him, would be the wiser method. He had settled in his own mind that she would not enlighten Sir Lindsay; but we must say that, even were it to prove otherwise, no fear of what he might see fit to do entered into his calculations.

In fact, Wilfred was thoroughly infatuated—he had, as we have said, been brought up to conceive no obstacle to the fulfillment of his wishes, save impossibility, as represented by want of money, and his thought was, not how to escape from any possible consequences of what he had done, but how to act so as best to precipitate the catastrophe which he was so determined should occur.

At length, after mature deliberation, he resolved on a temporary absence—it had, he thought, many advantages. It would persuade Hyacinth that, overwhelmed with her censure, and unable to bear the constant sight of her after her utter destruction of his hopes, he had fled from further temptation, and would therefore cause her to believe that he had bowed his head to the inevitable, and would throw her completely off her guard, of which he might reap the fruits when they met again—perhaps a month hence in Scotland. It would also have the advantage of showing her how utterly flat and dull her life would be when, deprived of his society, she had full leisure to count the hours that Sir Lindsay was absent at his club, or at Mrs. Marsfield's side.

So his determination was taken, and, going to the writing-table, he wrote a short note:

"DEAR LADY ETTRICK,

"I hope my non-appearance at dinner to-night will not cause you inconvenience, but this morning's post has brought me an urgent summons to come at once and transact business at Stanham. I have delayed so often, that I fear I must really go now. The period of my absence is quite uncertain.

"Truly yours,

"WILFRED LAMBERT."

He had thought of addressing this note to Sir Lindsay, but a moment's consideration convinced him that it would be better not to do so. Such a note would be more naturally, in ordinary circumstances, written to a hostess—it was best to conform to universal usage; and she would probably regard it as his mode of informing her that he had accepted his dismissal. So he wrote, directed, and dispatched the note, and, having made some few other arrangements, left town for Stanham by the 11.30 train.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse or thought or actual deed;
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them in any other form;
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will—though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement,—love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much;
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love."

Othello.

IT was late in the afternoon when Hyacinth awoke from heavy slumber, with the absolute physical pain of the headache considerably diminished, but with a feeling of great general discomfort, and with the oppression of that undefined weight

of woe so well known to those who have gone to rest in sorrow. That something terrible had happened, and that she was very miserable, were the only clearly-defined feelings in her mind; and she lay for some little time trying languidly to recall what had occurred. Then a note on the table beside her caught her eye, and, with the sight of Wilfred's well-known handwriting, the whole of the circumstances with which he was connected flashed at once into her mind. That he should have written to her after what had occurred struck her as the height of audacity. Should she return the letter unopened? Surely it would be the clearest way of showing that she was too deeply offended ever again to hold the least communication with him. She could not decide, and lay back dreamily, endeavoring to make up her mind, until she remembered that he was engaged to dine there that evening. Doubtless it was an excuse—under the circumstances, he must feel it impossible to fulfill his engagement—it would be ridiculous to return such a note; and she tore it open—not without some trepidation, however, as to what it might contain.

Its contents were a relief, and she gave a sigh of intense satisfaction. He had evidently left London for good, and she should be spared the awkwardness of cutting him—as she felt she could not have helped doing, though such a proceeding would naturally have surprised Lindsay exceedingly, and caused him to ask questions very difficult to answer, if she were to keep her own counsel as to the insult offered to her—as she had every present intention of doing. She felt almost grateful to Wilfred for having spared her this awkwardness, although, as she told herself bitterly, Lindsay seemed so little interested in her proceedings that very probably he might never have asked any questions at all. And with this her thoughts turned sadly to his indifference, and absorption in Mrs. Marsfield, when the door was thrown violently open, and her husband, evidently much excited, entered.

Sir Lindsay's temper was never a very good one—that is to say, it was easily ruffled, and not very quickly assuaged; and in this instance it must be confessed that he had considerable reason for annoyance, after the conversation to which he had been an unwilling listener. Still, it would certainly have been more judicious, to say nothing of being more just, if he had not allowed his irritation to obtain so completely the mastery

over him. It would, we imagine, be impossible for a member of the nobler sex to see matters in the same light as a woman: if it were practicable for him to do so, in however small a degree, he might very possibly be surprised, although we doubt if he would be altogether pleased, at the very different aspect which many social matters would assume. Sir Lindsay was one of the last people to see things save in the way most pleasing to himself. His creed would have been difficult to put into words; but, that once achieved, it would have read somewhat after this fashion:

That the husband was free to do whatsoever was good in his own eyes—to amuse himself in his own fashion, or to pay attention to any woman he pleased, or who might amuse him; that the wife was bound to be perfectly happy in seeing him pleased, even although his amusements not only took him from her side, but attached him to that of another; that, so long as she had horses, carriages, and servants at her command, and was allowed to go where she pleased, she had everything she could possibly require, and had no right to expect anything more; that, in short, so long as she was in a condition of material well being, such things as sympathy and companionship were unnecessary; that her duty was to be always cheerful and smiling, no matter what worries and vexations she might have to bear; always to take the inconveniences of life herself, so that no breeze should cause a ripple on the smooth sea of his self-satisfaction; to bear all his grumblings and fault-findings without a murmur, still more without an attempt at justification, or at pointing out that she was innocent of the faults laid to her charge,—in short, so to compass him with all sweet observances that he should be enabled to pass through life serenely happy, while she, the weaker vessel, bore the burden and heat of the day.

Hyacinth's warm heart was one which, with the least show of sympathy, would have been almost passionately affectionate. Had Lindsay been even moderately attentive to her, there would never have come even the suspicion of a cloud between them; but, like most really affectionate natures, she was quick-tempered and extremely proud. Her heart was deeply wounded by Lindsay's apparent indifference, while her pride was touched to the quick by his open preference for Mrs. Marsfield's society.

Subdued and shaken as she felt at the events of the pre-

vious day, a very few gentle words from Lindsay would have caused her to pour forth her sorrows, and show him how deeply she felt his neglect; and as he, as we have said before, really did love her, though he showed small sign of it, he might have been startled, and convinced that he was hurting her, and all might have been well between them. Such good fortune, however, was not to be. Lindsay was in no mood to be gentle. He had been gradually working himself up into a fever of excitement as he walked up from the club to Park Street, and was in no humor to think of anything but his own wrongs.

Hyacinth looked up as he entered.

"Lindsay, Mr. Lambert has written to say he cannot dine here to-night. Can you find some one else?"

"Dine here!—he'd better not cross my door-step again!" flamed out Lindsay. "Hyacinth, be good enough to tell me what you did after I left you yesterday. I should be glad to know how you account for the strange stories I hear."

Strange stories!—what could he mean? Wilfred was hardly likely to have spoken of having insulted her, and of having been rebuffed, and no other human being could possibly be cognizant of the fact. These thoughts passed through her mind as she said, quickly,—

"What have you heard?"

Lindsay gave a sneer, such as she had never yet seen on human lips.

"I am hardly quite such a fool as you appear to consider me, Lady Ettrick. I prefer hearing your story first, if you please; you can hear mine afterwards, when yours is past coloring."

"What do you mean?" cried Hyacinth, springing to her feet. "Do you imagine that I would say what was not true, or alter my 'story,' as you call it, for anything you might say? How dare you insult me so! I insist on knowing what you mean!"

"Oh! it is all very well to fly into a passion, and brazen it out in that way," replied Lindsay, "but that does not answer my question. What did you do with yourself after I left you yesterday, and at what time did you return home? I warn you prevarication is useless."

"Prevarication!"—Hyacinth's lip curled as it had never

done before—"are you sure you know to whom you are speaking? Perhaps you imagine that this is Grosvenor Place,"—Mrs. Marsfield did not hold very high rank for truthfulness among her friends.

Sir Lindsay's eyes flashed. To be resisted and taunted by his own wife—by the woman who was bound to sacrifice all pleasure, happiness, or comfort to his slightest whim—was more than he could stand. He seized her wrists, and held them as in a vice.

"Have done with trifling!" he said, angrily. "As your husband, I insist on knowing where you spent the evening yesterday."

"You had better find out," said Hyacinth, recklessly. He had almost maddened her with the insinuation that her word could not be trusted—that she would shape her story upon that which had already reached his ears.

"I tell you I insist upon knowing," repeated Lindsay, angrily.

"But as you imply that you would not believe me, I decline to speak," replied his wife. "Did you ever know me prevaricate, or knowingly say a word that was untrue? I say again you forget where you are—you think you are speaking to some one else."

"Will you answer or not?" hissed Lindsay through his set teeth.

"Say first that you will believe me," replied Hyacinth.

"I will try. Where were you yesterday?"

"At Richmond."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Lambert, Mrs. Trevor, and Monsieur Le Vergnier."

"Ah!—did they return with you?"

"No."

"I thought as much. Then that was the Richmond dinner from which she eloped! How did you come home?"

"On the drag, of course."

"Alone with Lambert?"

"There was no one else to come with."

"Let me hope, at least, you had the discretion to go inside?"

Now this, strange as it may appear, was an idea that had never struck Hyacinth. She had never thought of there being any more impropriety in sitting on the box, under the

circumstances of that homeward drive, than in doing so at any other time—which fact will sufficiently demonstrate her lamentable ignorance of the ways of the world, and of the *convenances* necessary to be observed by all who would escape the remarks of that estimable person, Mrs. Grundy. Now that the idea was suggested to her, it seemed incredible that it should never have presented itself to her mind at the proper time. If it had done so, she would still have been gay and light-hearted, and not forced to blush at the mention of Wilfred Lambert's name. As this passed through her mind, she felt for the first time that she had really been imprudent and to blame, and answered, in a softer tone,—

"No, I never once thought of it. I came up on the box."

Lindsay had noticed her hesitation while the conviction of her folly was dawning on her mind, but he attributed it to a wrong cause; he imagined she was balancing in her mind whether it would be safe to say that she had done what propriety required, and was only restrained from doing so by uncertainty as to how much he knew, so he said, bitterly,—

"It is as well you decided to tell the truth, for I know all. You were seen coming home at one o'clock this morning, alone on the box of a drag with a man with whom your name is already disadvantageously connected. You have abused my trust in you shamefully, and your name is a by-word in the clubs."

"What have I done?" asked Hyacinth, quite bewildered. "I came home, as you say, last night. I never once thought of going inside, as, now you mention it, I see I ought to have done. Heaven knows I wish I had!" she added, bitterly, thinking of what she should then have escaped. "I do not know what time it was. I—I was tired, and fainted as soon as I came in. We were to have left at ten, in time to be in London for Mrs. Percy's dance, but we waited and waited for Mrs. Trevor, and it was not till after eleven that her note, saying she had gone to London, was found."

Unfortunately, Lindsay could not be contented with having heard the whole truth from his wife, and with her evident sorrow for what had occurred. He continued,—

"As I say, you are not fit to be trusted. It is really very hard upon me."

"What do you mean? I insist upon knowing," exclaimed

Hyacinth, with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks. "I have done nothing wrong—nothing, at least, except not thinking of coming inside last night. I demand to know of what you accuse me."

"I hardly know what you may or may not have done," replied Lindsay, coldly. "All I know is this. My mother spoke to me seriously this morning about your levity, saying that you were encouraging Mr. Lambert to be here a great deal too much, and that people were beginning to talk of you together. Going to my club immediately after, I, being hidden from the speakers in a large arm-chair, heard of your return alone with him at one o'clock—heard you familiarly talked of as 'Wild Hyacinth,' and speculations offered that you would speedily follow Mrs. Trevor's example, and elope with your lover."

"He is not my lover," said Hyacinth, with the calm bitterness of concentrated emotion. "I devoutly hope I may never see his face again. I have often heard that the world was unjust, but in injustice such as this I never could have believed. I have had no clandestine meetings with Mr. Lambert. You knew perfectly well that he was here a great deal; nay, you encouraged him yourself. You never vouchsafed me your society. Did you expect me never to see any one?"

"I did not expect you to abuse my confidence."

"I deny that I have done so. Mr. Lambert has been here so much far more by your invitation than by mine; he made himself very agreeable, and I am not in the least ashamed of saying that I infinitely preferred his society to being left alone day after day and hour after hour."

"At least, you need not boast of having made yourself the talk of London," said Lindsay.

"I do not boast of anything. I only say you are very unjust to blame me for what is not my fault."

"Perhaps you will enlighten me as to whose fault it can be?"

"If you had not left me always alone, if you would have stayed at home with me, or have gone out with me, or done anything, in short, but had no eyes or ears for any one but that Mrs. Marsfield, Mr. Lambert would probably never have been here at all; so you may judge who is to blame."

Very defiant she looked as she said this, but an occasional hysterical sob gave warning that her strength would not endure

much longer. Lindsay had an uneasy feeling that there was more truth in her speech than he chose to admit even to himself; it was, therefore, with increased bitterness that he rejoined,—

"I certainly did not imagine that you required constant watching, and could not be trusted not to flirt the moment my back was turned. It is rather hard to expect a husband to be tied to his wife like a sort of duenna. Besides, I really thought you were to be trusted. My mother knew better, and warned me long ago that you were a thorough flirt; but we are all fools when we are in love, and your pretty face ruined my chance with Christian. Her oddities would have been bad enough, but they would have been better than disgrace."

"Don't say that, Lindsay—dear Lindsay!" cried Hyacinth, bursting into tears; "you know—I'm sure you do—you feel,—you must, that I have never done anything to disgrace you, that I never shall. Oh! don't say you would have been happier with any one else!"

"I could hardly be less happy than I am at this moment," replied her husband, gloomily.

"But that is because you won't see,—won't understand, Lindsay. I swear it, I have never cared the least in the world for any one but you."

"A curious way of showing it, to flirt with another man."

"I didn't flirt, Lindsay; I never thought a bit about him, except as some one amusing to talk to when you were away; I'd rather, far rather have talked to you, but I have hardly ever seen you. Oh! let us go away somewhere, where we can be alone together, like that happy time abroad, when you loved me, and had not met that Mrs. Marsfield."

If Hyacinth had been wise in her generation she would have carefully abstained from all mention of her rival, she would have known that her husband was certain to be irritated by any allusion to a matter in which he was clearly and undoubtedly in the wrong. But she never thought of this; all she knew was that she was profoundly miserable, that she wanted her husband all to herself, and hated bitterly every one who came between them, no matter how slightly; and that it was very, very hard that Lindsay should reproach her for what she could not help feeling was greatly his own fault.

But Lindsay, knowing that his attentions to Mrs. Marsfield had been rather marked, although, as he told himself, and as was indeed the case, he only frequented her society because she amused him, and was "good fun," was very indignant that his wife should make any complaint on the subject, and rejoined, coldly,—

"I do not see what you have to say about Mrs. Marsfield, or what business it is of yours. What we are talking of is your own levity of conduct, for which I cannot say that, as yet, you have offered any valid excuse."

"Yes, I have!" cried Hyacinth, her temper roused by his coldness and injustice. "I have done no harm at all. You left me alone all day long, you never would go out with me; indeed, you said you wished you had never married, when I even asked you. You knew that I went out alone, for you always encouraged me to do so, and I always told you where I had been, though I can't say it ever seemed to interest you. You knew that Mr. Lambert was teaching me new skating steps, and that he was here a great deal; if you objected, nothing was easier than to say so, and to put an end to it at once. I never flirted with him—you know that even while you accuse me of doing it; but if I had done so, I think I should have had ample excuse in the fact that my husband, instead of paying attention to me, was making open love to another woman."

"So that is your creed, is it?" said Sir Lindsay—"that if your husband does anything wrong (though mind in this instance I utterly deny the truth of what you have said), you are free and privileged to do the same. A very convenient view for you, I dare say, but it shows how little you know of the world. What is a sin in a woman, is of no consequence in a man."

"It is of consequence to his wife," sobbed Hyacinth.

"Nonsense! really, Hyacinth, you are too absurd. What have you to complain of? You say yourself that you have been allowed to do as you like, and all the return you make for this liberty is to get into scrapes, and make yourself the talk of London. That *my* wife should be known as 'Wild Hyacinth!'" and Sir Lindsay stamped his foot impatiently as he strode up and down the room.

"I have done nothing to make people call me so," replied

Hyacinth; "everything that I have done or said might be proclaimed at Hyde Park Corner, for all I care."

"And after compromising you like this, he had the audacity to write to you. Where is the note?"

Certainly there was not much fault to be found with that. Even to Sir Lindsay's jealous eyes it was as formal and as commonplace a document as he could desire.

"It is a good thing he is away," he said. "The season is so far advanced, I suppose you will hardly get up another flirtation this year. At any rate, now my eyes are open, I can take more care."

"I tell you I did not flirt!" cried Hyacinth, angrily.

"And I repeat that you must have done so most unblushingly, or you would not be spoken of as you are," replied her husband. "I tell you, Hyacinth, it is no use to deny it—you have behaved very ill, and it will be a very long time before I can feel any confidence in you again. It seems useless to speak to you—you really appear as if you had not the slightest sense of shame, and as if you rather gloried than otherwise in finding yourself possessed of such unenviable notoriety; but it is very mortifying to me, and I am excessively displeased. But my wishes and expostulations evidently have no weight. Oh! it's all very well to try to throw the blame upon me," for she was murmuring something about his neglect and preference for another. "But what man could be tied all day to his wife's apron-string, to see that she behaved properly? Matrimony would be less sought after even than is now the case, if that were necessary. Half-past seven!—time to dress for dinner."

"I shall not come down," said Hyacinth, coldly.

"What, you are going to sulk because you're spoken to? Well, I can't help it. There are some things a man can't stand. I'm sure I've said very little, under the circumstances."

And he left the room without another word, or a glance at his wife.

Poor Hyacinth!—she sat as if turned to stone. It seemed to her that all happiness, all the brightness of her life, had gone forever. Nothing she could say seemed to have the least effect upon Lindsay—he treated all her protestations of innocence with sovereign contempt, and seemed to attach no more importance to them than if they had been empty air.

This in itself was almost maddening. To speak earnestly and truthfully, to protest passionately, and then to find that, for all the effect her asseverations had had, they might as well have remained unspoken—that the same accusations were repeated that she had just, as she thought, so triumphantly refuted.

But what hurt her most was the way in which Lindsay had ignored her piteous appeal to him not to say he would have been happier with Christian. All his love for her must be gone, she thought, and sobbed bitterly as she thought so. Why could he not see her heart, and know how truly and devotedly she loved him? But if he had ceased to love her he would not care. He evidently did not care for or believe in any of her professions of affection. She had always read that men were fickle—he was tired of her, and probably very sorry that he was married, and therefore tied to her. Had he not insinuated as much? And his heart had gone from her keeping to that bold, bad Mrs. Marsfield.

And as she thought of all her sorrows, Hyacinth buried her face in the sofa-cushions, and sobbed as if her heart would break. But having cried till she was fairly exhausted, she began to take a rather different view of matters. If Lindsay were tired of her, it was subjecting herself to unnecessary humiliation to show him so plainly as she had endeavored to do how precious he was to her. He had been most unjust, he had blamed her for conduct of which she had never been guilty, and had thrown all the blame of his own carelessness and neglect upon her.

Her pride rose—he should see that she too could resent injuries; he should wait for her endearments in future; they should not be given unasked. And with this determination, which made her heart ache as it had never done before, she went to bed, and sobbed herself into the sleep of utter exhaustion.

As soon as his guests had departed, Sir Lindsay went to South Street, and laid the whole story before his mother. Mrs. Ettrick could not resist a feeling of malicious satisfaction. Had she not prophesied that no good would come of this marriage?—that Hyacinth was a born flirt, and would be certain to compromise herself?—and had not her predictions been accurately fulfilled. Still, she was far too wise to indulge herself with the satisfaction of saying, "I told you so;" but

turned her energies to giving her son the best advice in her power.

"Suppose you go abroad for a little, Lindsay. After all, there is not much harm done, excepting the drag story, and it will all be forgotten in a month."

But this did not suit Lindsay's convenience.

"Hang it, no! I can't go. I've got a heap of pleasant things to do; and then there's Goodwood—I can't miss that; the Marsfields have got a house at Bognor."

"I hardly think it wise to leave her in London alone; there is no knowing when Mr. Lambert may come back, and if you should happen to be away, things might fall into their old routine, as you say she declines to admit she was wrong."

"Then what would you have me do?"

Mrs. Ettrick considered for a little while, and then said,—

"I think, if you were to be apart a little, it would be a good thing; you are both sore just now, and sure to irritate each other. Give out that she is unwell, and wants sea-air, and send her down to stay with Ursula; it will simplify matters immensely; no one can say a word against her staying with your own sister, and when she joins you again, after Goodwood, this unpleasantness will have blown over, and you can begin afresh."

Sir Lindsay thought a little; and then, finding that, look at the suggestion how he would, there was nothing in it that could by any possibility give him annoyance or disturb his plans, he said, "It would do admirably, if Ursula will agree."

"Oh! I'll manage her," said his mother. "Ursula, as you know, never cares what happens, so long as she can live in church, and Henry will be very glad of a new inmate, I've no doubt. I'll write at once; you'd better go and break it to Hyacinth."

But when he returned, Hyacinth was asleep, and her flushed, tear-stained cheeks made him pause, and resolve to postpone his communication till the next morning. At the first mention of her going away, Hyacinth looked up.

"Oh, then, of course I may go to Ettrick? Dear Christian, how glad I shall be to see her again!"

"And how charmingly near Ettrick is to Stanham!" said Lindsay, with a sneer. "No, Ettrick is about the last place for you under the circumstances; besides, really, between your

flightiness and Christian's oddities, there is no saying what you might not do. No, I propose that you should go to my sister, Mrs. St. Orbe, at Rockcliffe. Of course, the pretext will be that the fatigues of the season have been too much for you, and that you require sea-air."

"It is not the case, and I decline to say so," said Hyacinth, coldly.

"It seems you decline to do anything which I wish," replied Lindsay. "However, I have settled that this plan is best for you, and intend to carry it out. Of course, if you choose to take the world into your confidence, and announce that I could not allow you to remain in London because of your utter want of common prudence of conduct, I cannot prevent your doing so; but I should imagine that good taste, to say nothing of the affection you are kind enough to *profess* for me, would prevent your so committing yourself."

It was hard, very hard, to bear this being sent away like a child in disgrace, to lose sight of Lindsay, whom she loved so passionately, though she tried hard to persuade herself that her love was killed, and that she was growing to hate his unkindness and despise his injustice. She wished to look and to seem indifferent, and her only chance of succeeding was by keeping silence. She knew full well that, if she spoke, tears and sobs would have their way, so she held her peace, being rewarded for so doing by being informed that she was sulky, and in two days' time found herself, with her maid, *en route* to Rockcliffe.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there."
Essays of Criticism.

MRS. ST. ORBE, Sir Lindsay's only sister, was as yet unknown to Hyacinth. She and her husband had of course been invited to the wedding, but the invitation had been declined, owing to the date being identical with that of the consecration of a church at Rockliffe, in which she was greatly

interested. Before her marriage, some nine or ten years before, Mrs. St. Orbe had never been known by the name of Ursula; her first name being Mirabel, and Ursula having only being added in compliment to an old aunt of Mrs. Ettrick's. Mirabel Ettrick had been her mother's sole companion, and a daughter after her own heart, living solely for the world and for its pleasures and excitements.

But there had apparently been one soft corner in her heart, and she had given evidence of it by falling desperately in love with Captain St. Orbe, a young cavalry officer, whom she had met in a country house during an Easter visit. The attachment was mutual, and in vain did Mrs. Ettrick offer every opposition in her power. Mirabel, like Lindsay, inherited their mother's obstinacy of disposition, and, when her mind was once made up, stuck to her point with invincible determination.

Captain St. Orbe was far from being a rich man, although possessed of a certain competence, and it was a bitter disappointment to Mrs. Ettrick to be forced to forego her cherished schemes for her daughter, and to yield a tardy and unwilling consent to her marrying as she chose. She made one stipulation, that her son-in-law should leave the army, and it argued how great was Mirabel's empire over him that he consented to relinquish his profession, the only thing he really cared for. They settled at Rockcliffe, in a villa which had been left him by an aunt, with an income of about fifteen hundred a year, and there they had lived ever since.

When the first excitement of her new position had died away, Mrs. St. Orbe began to find her life unspeakably dull and monotonous. She had all her life been accustomed to continual excitement, and although she loved Henry St. Orbe as much as was possible for one of her essentially cold nature, still the sentiment was by no means sufficiently strong to take the place of all that she had lost, and she was fast becoming querulous and fretful, when an event occurred which changed the whole tenor of her life—the death of the rector of Rockcliffe. This rector, who had been in charge of the parish for nearly fifty years, had been a gentle, amiable old man, possessed of no extreme views, and inclined to an indolence more characteristic of the church of his youth than of that of the present day.

When he had first come to Rockcliffe, it had been a small

fishing-village, and, notwithstanding that it had gradually increased into a fashionable, though not overgrown, watering-place, he had never perceived the necessity of greater exertion, or even of increasing the number of his services.

On his death, about a year after Mrs. St. Orbe's marriage, a very great change was at once effected. The Rev. Ambrose Fuller, the rector appointed by the bishop, had been working hard for five years as a curate in a densely-populated London parish, and had grown so devoted to his people that he would have unhesitatingly declined the offer of the valuable rectory of Rockcliffe, had not failing health forced him to resign his curacy.

A man of singular energy and devotion, with strong talents and decided views, he had early joined the High Church party, and was stigmatized as a ritualist by those who differed from him, although the title was by no means deserved. To such a one the condition of Rockcliffe, divided between somnolent no-church-in-particularism, in comfortably cushioned and curtained pews, and rampant dissent rising hydra-headed in chapels of every conceivable denomination, was a source of consternation and horror. He lost no time. Within a fortnight he had preached two sermons, which had had, at least, the effect of arresting his hearers' attention, and of opening their minds to the novel fact that their condition of sleepy calm was not, as they would have imagined if they had ever given the subject a thought, the normal state of the rest of the world; he had announced the necessity that, in his opinion, existed of at once altering the interior of the fine old church; he had opened a subscription-list for the purpose, heading it himself with a sum of one hundred pounds; he had called on nearly all the residents, to invite their co-operation, and had astounded them considerably by the extent of his wishes and the elevation of his views, but chiefly by the announcement of his intention of keeping two curates; and he had made himself acquainted with a large number of his poorer parishioners.

His church services, too, were subjects of never-ending surprise. Never before, save on Christmas Day or Good Friday, had the old church of St. Michael been opened for service on a week-day; the two Sunday services, being all that old Mr. Vaughan had been accustomed to in his youth, were all he deemed necessary in his old age.

But matters were speedily changed. Matins at eight, and vespers at five, with three Sunday services, besides special evening week-day services for the working men, were established as soon as Mr. Fuller had secured the services of the two curates, whose advent had appeared so uncalled-for to the inhabitants of Rockliffe.

There was plenty of other work, too, to be done—schools to be, if not established, at any rate put on a very different footing, as to the efficiency expected of them, from that with which they had hitherto been content; districts to be mapped out, and visitors appointed; and last, although by no means least, the choir to be organized.

It was perhaps as well that no attempt in that direction had ever been made; it materially lessened the difficulties in the way that there were no existing interests involved, not even the old violoncello and clarionet of primeval days. The very meaning of the word "chanting" was barely understood in Rockliffe; "Hymns Ancient and Modern" were as yet unknown there; the old clerk gave out a psalm, and led off in a cracked treble, assisted in various keys by different members of the congregation.

It was the matter of the choir that first brought Mrs. St. Orbe into intimate communication with Mr. Fuller. She was an accomplished musician, a fact which he discovered at a dinner-party where he met her two days after his arrival. One of the chief secrets of his success—of course after his energy and whole-heartedness in the cause—was his talent for making use of the gifts of each member of his congregation; he asked for, and expected, help to be given as cordially as he was willing to give it. There was, he felt, a most Herculean task before him; the mass of the people were so wedded to Dissent that to obtain any hold over them would require the straining of every nerve and sinew; and, never grudging the labor, he gave himself heart and soul to the work. Had he not been so engrossed, the extreme views of his senior curate must have struck him more forcibly than they did. The Rev. Cyprian Bates was, in truth, what his rector was sometimes erroneously called, an "advanced ritualist," one of those who set their own interpretation of rubrics, forms, and ceremonies far above the opinions of those in authority over them.

While Mr. Fuller was struggling with the errors of Dissent,

wrestling hard to bring benighted souls into the one true fold, Mr. Bates was chiefly occupied with the ceremonial of the church, the training of the choir, and various cognate matters, and, unfortunately, it was into his hands that Mrs. St. Orbe fell. If she had become as intimate with Mr. Fuller as she was with his curate, the effect upon her character might have been very different; his singleness of purpose and high-souled devotion rarely failed to make some impression upon those with whom he came much in contact.

It must not be imagined that Mr. Bates was insincere—very far, indeed, from it; but the shallowness of his mind and heart had caused him to mistake the shadow for the substance, and to set an inordinate value on forms and ceremonies for their own sakes, instead of regarding them simply as symbolizing important truths. He was sincere and conscientious to the last degree, according to his lights, but they unfortunately were small; he lacked the large-hearted charity and profound sympathy of his superior, and with them the power to touch and soften the hearts of his hearers. He was the last man to be able to apply the softening power of religion to Mirabel St. Orbe's heart; but he regarded her almost in the light of a convert, from the eagerness with which she became his assistant in all formal work for the church.

Weary of a quiet life, thirsting for excitement of some kind, Mrs. St. Orbe threw herself heart and soul into Mr. Bates's plans, and in so doing was apt frequently and grievously to neglect the plain and obvious duties of her home. She was a weak, although a very obstinate, woman; in a very short space of time she had erected the curate into a species of pope, and could do nothing without his opinion and advice. She adopted and intensified all his views, fasted till she was ill, got up at the most unearthly hours to the early services, and drove her amiable, easy-going husband to the verge of distraction. Henry St. Orbe was good-natured to a fault; it would have been just as well for his wife if he had not given in quite so peaceably to all her whims and fancies, but he dearly loved a quiet life, and allowed himself to be made uncomfortable, and all his domestic arrangements to be disturbed, rather than exert himself so far as to interfere.

Very soon Mrs. St. Orbe discovered that, being possessed of such a saintly cognomen as Ursula, it was a light that

should by no means be suffered to remain hidden under a bushel. Mirabel was therefore discarded, and doomed to oblivion, despite the ridicule of her mother and the entreaties of her husband.

The latter, indeed, had little weight, as he frequently deplored, with as much bitterness as was possible to his naturally sweet disposition; but his complaints made little or no impression, and gradually his affection was transferred from his wife to his children. It was well for them that he cared for them as he did. Beyond insisting that they should be named after some saint, Mrs. St. Orbe was far too occupied with her church dissipation to take much heed as to anything that concerned them. Mr. Bates, now the incumbent of the new district church of St. Mary, claimed, not in vain, the whole of her attention, and Benedict, Bridget, Hilary, Perpetua, and Cecilia would have been left to run wild, or at best confided to the tender mercies of servants, if their father had not been ready and willing to take a mother's place.

Few men would have performed the part so well, still fewer but would have felt and spoken bitterly respecting their wives' neglect of plain and obvious duties; but no complaint passed the lips of Henry St. Orbe. It never dawned on his true and simple nature that all his wife's untiring devotion to choir and school, church decoration and innumerable services, was but another form of the excitement and dissipation to which she had all her life been accustomed, and which, at the commencement of her married life, she had so cruelly missed. Such was, however, the case.

There was neither excitement nor pleasure to Mrs. St. Orbe in teaching her own children their catechism, but these were both to be obtained at the school; there was the triumph of having the most forward and well-instructed class, the satisfaction of knowing that she was considered the most successful lady-teacher in the district, and, above all, the excitement of there being always a possibility that Mr. Bates himself, or, at least, one of his curates, would drop in.

Let it not be supposed for a moment that Ursula St. Orbe was disposed to flirt with her pastors, even if they had been willing to accommodate her; but to some women there is an incomprehensible pleasure in the mere presence of a man; his appearance gives a zest and excitement to matters otherwise

most commonplace, and she was essentially a woman to experience this. But of such attractions Henry St. Orbe was far too simple-minded to dream; like all honest-hearted and noble-minded men, he believed implicitly in the goodness, the purity, the piety of women; although he did not himself feel the want of the incessant services which his wife so regularly attended.

Mr. Fuller's hearty and reverent service pleased and satisfied him far better than the ornate and quasi-Roman-Catholic ritual introduced by Mr. Bates at St. Mary's (or, as he and his chosen parishioners elected to call it, the Church of Our Blessed Lady). He did not feel it necessary for his spiritual welfare to fast during lent until he became possibly ill, and certainly cross, and would have been sorely puzzled and discomfited had he found himself entrapped into an attempted confession; but he never doubted that such things were necessary to his wife's higher religious life, and felt disposed greatly to admire and somewhat to envy her in consequence. It did not strike him that such great professions were somewhat at variance with a very sharp tongue and a marked predilection for scandal, or that any one absorbed in religious duties would hardly have known so accurately who was at church, or what they wore, as his wife invariably did.

From the days when Mr. Fuller first aroused the inhabitants to the comprehension that something more was expected of them than to slumber placidly in padded pews, a great change had taken place in Rockcliffe. In those nine years the size of the place had nearly trebled—villas had been built in picturesque positions; and besides the greatly-increased number of residents, the place was filled to overflowing in the bathing season.

It was not a very distinguished class of visitors as yet that flocked thither—chiefly manufacturers and their families from the neighboring counties; but still they filled the town, and necessitated more and more church accommodation. Mr. Fuller's unwearied efforts had effected such a diminution in the number of dissenters that only one chapel now remained, of the many that he had found so flourishing on his arrival. Besides the church of St. Mary, whereof Mr. Bates was the incumbent, it had been found necessary to build another large one, which was dedicated to St. John; and it was the conse-

cration of this that had prevented Captain and Mrs. St. Orbe's attendance at Lindsay's and Hyacinth's marriage.

"What have you there, Ursula?" asked her husband, as Mrs. St. Orbe knit her brows over Mrs. Ettrick's letter, detailing Lindsay's wish that his wife should spend a short time with his sister. "You look put out."

"A sad story," said his wife, shaking her head gravely. She was always disposed to regard her neighbor's faults in the least favorable light. "Lady Ettrick has been guilty of great levity of conduct, if nothing worse, and it is desirable she should leave town at once. Lindsay wants to know if we will have her here."

"Of course there can't be two opinions about that," observed her husband; "but I wonder, though, Lindsay does not take her abroad for a little. They've only been married a year, and she had never seen any society before. No doubt it's more want of experience of the ways of the world that is the matter than anything else."

"Naturally you think so," replied his wife, coldly. "Men always do believe in the perfection of pretty women." (It had always been a sore point with Mrs. St. Orbe that her husband should admire Hyacinth's photograph, in which she saw not the smallest beauty.) "For my own part I prefer propriety of conduct. However, as Bridget and Perpetua are both too young to be contaminated, I suppose we may as well oblige Lindsay, as my mother seems to make a great point of it. Perhaps, too, the visit may be blessed to her; and Mr. Bates's eloquence may touch her heart. He is especially successful in such cases."

"Ursula," said her husband, gravely, "it is not often, as you know, that I attempt to advise you, but I strongly recommend you not to speak of or to Lady Ettrick in that strain; at any rate, until you know more of the circumstances than you do at present."

Mrs. St. Orbe tossed her head—she was not accustomed to interference, and prided herself particularly on being able to understand the whole state of a case from the very smallest indications. Mrs. Ettrick had written hurriedly, and had given no particulars; but her daughter had already judged and condemned her sister-in-law, and had almost, in her own mind, settled all the details of her supposed crimes.

It was a lovely evening when Hyacinth reached Rockcliffe, which place now claims a few words of description. It was built round a deep bay, surrounded by dark rocks, except in the centre, where the hills receded very considerably, and left a small sheltered plain, on which the principal portion of the town was built. On the wooded hill behind—wooded principally, though not entirely, with Scotch fir—were scattered innumerable villas, which, with their diversified architecture, gave a pleasing variety to the landscape. On the eastern side of the bay the rocks stretched out into the sea, terminating in a small island, crowned by a clump of weather-worn firs, and attainable across a strip of sand at low water. On the western side the cliffs were less steep and severe in character, and were diversified with small clefts and dells, enriched with luxuriant vegetation.

In the centre of the town rose the fine tower of the old parish church; while the spires of St. Mary's and St. John's formed conspicuous objects, at about equal distances from it on either side. Seen as Hyacinth saw it for the first time, in the still hush and gorgeous hues of a July sunset, with the sapphire sea set in a rim of golden sand, Rockcliffe was a strikingly pretty place; and disturbed, miserable, indignant as she was, she felt some satisfaction that her place of banishment was so eminently picturesque. She knew but little of the sea—her only knowledge of it being the crossing from Folkestone to Boulogne, and the acquaintance she had made with the Mediterranean on the shores of the Riviera. It had therefore for her all the additional charm of novelty.

Captain St. Orbe met his sister-in-law at the station, and her appearance at once confirmed the favorable impression made upon him by her photograph. Mrs. St. Orbe's greeting was cold and stiff, and she utterly declined to perceive the beauty in Lady Ettrick that her husband discovered.

It is rare, indeed, that men and women admire the same person; the natural tendency of a woman's mind is to follow line and rule, and she seldom sees beauty in features lacking regularity, or in a complexion that is not composed of the orthodox lilies and roses. Men, on the contrary, are apt to prefer an intelligent countenance, and plenty of expression, while they comparatively seldom take heed to complexions at all, and therefore the *nez retroussé*, so subversive in Mrs. St.

Orbe's eyes of the slightest claim to beauty on her sister-in-law's part, was amply condoned, in her husband's opinion, by the grace of her manner and piquancy of her expression.

Mrs. St. Orbe compressed her lips with an air of supreme disapproval when Hyacinth languidly but decidedly declined to be called in time for matins, saying that she was not fond of early hours. She elected to consider her sister-in-law somewhat in the light of a penitent confided to her care, and considered she ought to be prepared to move at her bidding.

Hyacinth would have been considerably surprised could she have fathomed Mrs. St. Orbe's thoughts. She imagined that the over-fatigue of the season, and the necessity for sea-air, which Lindsay had carelessly observed were the reasons which he should give for her sudden departure, were those which had been given to her sister-in-law. She was feeling more miserable than she had ever believed it possible that she could do, yearning for Lindsay's company, and yet feeling a bitter sense of wrong and injury at his treatment of her. What had she done that he should treat her as if she had committed some dreadful crime? She had vainly endeavored to be always with him—it certainly was no fault of hers that she had not been so. She had endeavored to hide the pain she felt at his preference for the society of another, lest it should annoy and weary him; she had never either said or heard a word that might not have been said openly in his presence, until that fatal night, and then, although she had, as she now saw, been foolish and imprudent to a degree that she could never sufficiently deplore, she still could not see that she had done anything to warrant Lindsay's harshness, or her banishment from home and husband. Warm-hearted and high-spirited, the feeling of injustice galled her terribly, and the more she dwelt upon it, the greater grew her resentment against her husband. Really her heart was aching to see him, to hear him call her his Bluebell, to feel his arm once more around her, but she was far indeed from being aware of it. She believed that she no longer cared for him, that he had killed her love, that all the joy and happiness of her life were blighted forever.

Poor child! she knew little of the mysteries of the human heart, or she would have known full well that the bitter pangs of agonizing jealousy that wrung her heart whenever she

thought of Lindsay sitting for hours with Mrs. Marsfield, argued anything rather than the indifference, or rather the contemptuous dislike, which she imagined herself to feel. Meanwhile she was very quiet and silent, rambled about a good deal alone, or else with her brother-in-law and the children, and daily confirmed Henry St. Orbe's opinion, enunciated the day after her arrival to his wife, that, "whatever people might say, there was no harm in her," an utterance which only elicited from Mrs. St. Orbe a contemptuous smile.

It was some days before she found the opportunity she desired of turning the conversation in the direction of Mr. Bates; but one day, before luncheon, finding Hyacinth seated in the drawing-room, her hands folded listlessly in her lap, and her eyes fixed on vacancy, she began,—

"My dear Hyacinth, I wish I could persuade you to come to vespers with me this afternoon."

Hyacinth looked up.

"Thank you, Ursula, I had rather go and sit by the sea."

"But," persevered Mrs. St. Orbe, "surely you must feel the want of comfort and consolation, only to be found in the ministrations of our holy church. Surely it would be an unspeakable relief to your burdened mind to lay your troubles at the foot of the cross, through the mediation of the priest? Mr. Bates will see you alone in the vestry with pleasure."

"What for?" said Hyacinth, wonderingly, and by no means seeing her sister-in-law's drift.

"To receive your confession," replied Mrs. St. Orbe, promptly.

"My confession!" Hyacinth's blue eyes opened to their widest extent. "My dear Ursula, I had no idea you were a Catholic! But what could make you imagine that I was one?"

"I never for a moment thought you were a *Romanist*," replied Mrs. St. Orbe, with some acidity, "which is what, I presume, you intend to convey by a Catholic; but as a member of the Holy Catholic Church, you might, I should imagine, in your present lamentable circumstances, be thankful to unburden your conscience by confession."

"Unburden my conscience!—lamentable circumstances! May I inquire what it is you do or do not mean?" said Hyacinth, haughtily, and standing, drawn up to her full height, before her sister-in-law. "I must insist upon an explanation,"

she continued, as she observed that Mrs. St. Orbe hesitated. "You have said either too much or too little."

"I should have thought you would have been too glad to escape it; but of course, if you insist, I refer to the unfortunate circumstances under which you left my brother's roof."

"What may you have heard of them?" asked Hyacinth, turning scarlet, and vowing in her heart that she would never forgive Lindsay for having entailed upon her this unnecessary humiliation.

"Simply that your levity of conduct was so great that my brother was unable to allow you to remain in London," replied Mrs. St. Orbe; "and of course we are very glad to be able to extend to you a shelter in every way so suitable, which we could hardly have done had our girls been older. And now let me again urge upon you to see Mr. Bates—his tact and gentleness with penitents are unrivaled."

For all answer Hyacinth laid her hands on her sister-in-law's shoulders, and shook her as Ursula St. Orbe had not been shaken since her nursery days.

"How dare you?" she said, in a low tone of intense indignation—"how dare you so insult me? You have told your story, now hear mine. Do you know the mighty harm that I have done? I was so thoughtless as to come home from Richmond alone on the box of a drag with Mr. Lambert—that is really the whole head and front of my offending; and we never should have been alone, if the lady and gentleman who were of the party had not left us without warning. Unfortunately a gentleman passed as I reached my own door. Lindsay, to whom I never had an opportunity of telling the story, heard it accidentally the next day at the club, came home exceedingly angry, and insulted me grossly. I quite acknowledge—I did at once—that I was very foolish and thoughtless; but I really think that confession is hardly worth troubling the gentleman who is 'so gentle with *penitents*' with; and it is the only one I have to make. Let me advise you another time to know your story before you make impertinent insinuations." And, turning on her heel, Hyacinth walked out of the room, leaving Mrs. St. Orbe in a state bordering on stupefaction.

To be reproved, set down, insulted, shaken like a naughty child in her own drawing-room! She could hardly either

believe her senses or repress her indignation. And yet she felt a mortifying conviction that there was nothing she could do to appease her outraged dignity. Her husband would be sure to tell her that she deserved what she had got—that if she had taken his advice and said nothing, had not, in short, assumed that she knew a great deal of which she was perfectly ignorant, such humiliation could never have been hers.

Of course she did not believe Hyacinth's story—she was prone to believe the worst of every one, and it was so easy, as she said to herself, for her sister-in-law to assume an air of injured innocence to which she had no sort of right. Still, it was very clear that Lady Ettrick was not a person to be lectured with impunity, and with infinite reluctance she was forced to resolve not to interfere with her again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

> "Far and wide,
> Across the Thames's gleaming tide,
> To distant fields the blaze was borne,
> And daisy white and hoary thorn
> In borrowed lustre seemed to sham
> The rose or red Sweet William."
>
> *A Tale of Drury Lane.*

THE months that had passed since the famous meeting at Elmton had, although uneventful, been far from pleasant to Christian. The recollection of the lecture was exquisitely painful to her, and she had the additional shock of hearing, two or three days afterwards, that the treasurer had disappeared with all the money. Dr. Barker, as we have said before, had made up her mind that she had sucked her orange dry, and would do well to betake herself to fresh fields; but there were two events on which she had not calculated: one was the unexpected and objectionable nature of the lecture which was to have created such a sensation, and which, copied into different papers, would, as she well knew, create a prejudice against the cause, and against herself as a promoter of it,

anywhere where the account was read; the other was the defection of Sophonisba Jinks, without whose assistance, as a persuasive lecturer, she could hope to do but little.

It was a terrible blow to her when, having waited in vain for the appearance of the secretary, she ascended to her room, to find it empty, the boxes gone, and the drawers cleared. It was very evident that Sophonisba had no intention of returning, and equally so that she had left no clue to her whereabouts.

Descending, much perturbed, to the parlor, Dr. Barker was confronted by Miss Eliza Washington Bang, who, having heard of the fate which had befallen the money-box containing the night's receipts, had made her appearance, to claim at once the stipulated sum for her labors. Very bitter were Dr. Barker's reproaches and strictures upon the mischief she had done, and corresponding the ire excited in Miss Bang's mind. She considered her lecture a triumph, was by no means dismayed at the tumult in which it had closed, and laughed to scorn Dr. Barker's assurances that "such plain-speaking would never go down in the old country," averring that, if she spoke at all, "she'd just give the Britishers a bit of her mind."

It was very clear to Dr. Barker that there would be no use in allying herself to this fire-brand for her future career; she should do infinitely better alone than with such a successor to the fair Sophonisba; so, with many a heartfelt sigh over the lost earnings of the previous night, she prepared for departure.

Some time was spent in arranging the accounts; she had no intention of leaving Miss Tibbs the triumph of finding her suspicions of their accuracy verified, but she left a very small sum in the exchequer, and although by the books this seemed perfectly correct, Miss Martha was suspicious, and confiding her opinions to a young nephew, who was a clerk in the County Bank, heard accidentally from him of the hundred-pound check of Miss Ettrick's that had been presented and indorsed by the defaulting treasurer.

Perhaps Miss Tibbs had never in her whole life experienced such exquisite satisfaction as she derived from convening a special meeting of the committee, and announcing what had occurred, coupled with considerable glorification of her own superior wisdom in having long ago discovered that something

was wrong. But she was by no means prepared for the storm of vituperation with which she was assailed, so soon as her listeners had recovered from the shock, for not having sooner made her suspicions public. Dr. Barker had disappeared, and left not a trace behind; Miss Sophonisba had disappeared likewise, although it was beginning to be whispered that she had eloped with young Mr. White—indeed, Miss Deakin, finding her bill left unpaid, bemoaned herself loudly, and revealed all she knew.

It was a very bitter pill indeed for female Elmton to swallow, this finding itself so well duped by the two responsible leaders of the movement it had so warmly embraced, and the mirth and jubilation of the male portion of the community hardly made it easier to bear. As may be imagined, bereft of its leaders, the society languished, and when Elmton accidentally discovered that some of the "branch societies," from which they had received such flattering missives, existed only in Miss Sophonisba's fertile brain, and became convinced that Parliament entertained no immediate intention of returning a special reply to the petition which had been presented by their member, the chief desire of the ladies who had composed the committee was to bury their past proceedings in oblivion, and become forthwith as feminine and as frivolous as in them lay. It was Miss Tibbs who wrote to enlighten Christian, dwelling much on the sore misgivings by which she had long been possessed, and specially emphasizing the abstraction of the check.

It was a great blow to Christian, and perhaps it is not very surprising that she should have begun to read pamphlets and speeches on the other side of the question, and to find them infinitely more convincing than, six months before, she could have believed possible.

Doubtless Laurence had much to do with this; he met her frequently in her rides, carefully avoided either laughing at or triumphing over her, and threw most of the literature she was now studying in her way by means of Lady Elmshire, besides frequently meeting her at the Castle, and protecting her as much as he could from the teasing she sometimes underwent there. His "interest" was deepening fast; it needed very little to reveal to him how deep a love he had conceived for her, though he was as yet unaware of it.

And Christian? She was to the full as unconscious as he was that there was any question of love between them. She attributed her nervousness in his presence, and the burning blood that rushed to her cheeks at his approach, to a recollection of the agony she had endured in being conscious of his presence during that never-to-be-forgotten lecture. She had been sorely disappointed at not seeing Hyacinth at Easter. She had never cherished any anticipation of visiting them in London; she foresaw from the very first that her presence would interfere with her brother-in-law's arrangements, and read his disposition too well to imagine that anything would induce him to put himself out in the slightest degree; but she had fully reckoned on having her darling sister for a week or two at the end of the hunting season, and was proportionately dismayed when Sir Lindsay decreed that they should go to London direct from Knotlem.

In her almost daily letters Hyacinth concealed, to the best of her ability, her growing unhappiness, and though Christian felt an uneasy conviction that something was wrong, despite her sister's glowing description of London gayeties and highly-colored pictures of the delights of Prince's, she had nothing definite on which to found her impression. Indeed, all through the spring and early summer she had plenty to think of in the consequences of her own inconsiderate actions in the autumn. She had carried out the reduction of wages on the first of March of which she had given notice in the previous November, and had the melancholy fact made clear to her that she had made herself obnoxious to all parties. The employers of labor could hardly be blamed for looking coldly on her—until she had upset the county with her headstrong fancies, the Union delegates had striven in vain to gain any hold over the people. The Elmshire laborers were well off, and had had the rare good sense to know when they were so, until their minds were thrown off the balance by the sudden rise of wages and abandonment of stoppages for absence at Ettrick.

Even then, left to themselves, they would only have solaced themselves by grumbling, but the delegates saw their opportunity, swarmed like locusts over the country, and talked the majority of the men into joining the Union. They had already injured them. Of course the farmers knew that the Union meant that, at the first opportunity, when work was

pressing, and labor scarce, their men would seize the occasion to make some exorbitant demand, and that, on the necessary refusal, they would not only be ordered to strike, but that the few non-union men left—the boasted liberty of the British subject notwithstanding—would not dare, under pain of death, to work, even to keep themselves or their families from starving.

Equally of course, they prepared for the struggle by associating themselves together, by discharging every man they could by any possibility spare, and by buying such machinery as they could afford, to economize labor.

Until the reduction of wages absolutely took place Christian had the solace of some little gratitude; not, indeed, from her laborers, who passed her sulkily and with averted eyes, but from such among their wives as, frugal themselves, and blessed with steady husbands, were able to save up their unwonted wealth, instead of squandering it weekly.

Perhaps one of the things that grieved her the most sorely was the manifest increase of drunkenness immediately consequent on her ill-advised liberality; it was so very far from what she had either expected or intended. But when the reduction came the complaints became loud and grievous. To listen to those deprived it would have seemed as if the higher sum were the accustomed wage that had been hitherto peacefully enjoyed by every man on the estate as his undoubted right, instead of a boon to be thankful for having possessed, even although it was now withdrawn.

Christian made every excuse for them, blaming herself bitterly—perhaps no one knew how bitterly, excepting Laurence Courtray—yet unable to dissemble to herself how much she felt their ingratitude. To others, however, she would not admit it.

"It was all my fault," she would say. "I was foolish and headstrong, and would not listen to those who were wiser than I. Blame me—you cannot do so more than I do myself; but only pity these poor people, who are too ignorant to understand why I cannot go on helping them in the only way patent to their comprehension."

Just as the hay required cutting, the long-anticipated strike came. The farmers, forewarned, had done their utmost, and had engaged gangs of non-union men to come and do their

work, so for the first week all went well. But then the delegates came upon the scene, and delivered inflammatory addresses, and in a day or two threatening notices were posted everywhere against the new-comers; and one or two non-unionists, who had been so imprudent as to separate from the main body, were severely maltreated—one of them, a favorite laborer of Christian's, so severely that he died three days afterwards.

This cowardly outrage roused her as no amount of ingratitude could have done. She assembled her men, and spoke to them, but, to her dismay, was assailed with such a storm of hisses, yells, and threats that Lord Elmshire and Laurence, who were both present, implored her to retire at once; which she did, but not before she had said, in a clear, distinct voice,—

"I never could have believed I could have been so grieved by, or so utterly ashamed of, Ettrick men."

The men seemed rather inclined to be ashamed of themselves—perhaps they might have been, had not a delegate sprung up and made a fluent speech, justifying what they had done; and his specious arguments seemed unanswerable logic to the poor ignorant peasants who listened to him.

Their ill feeling broke out again on the day of the poor non-unionist's funeral, which Christian insisted on attending in person, and on her return from which she was hooted, stones were thrown at her carriage, and a crowd assembled before her gate, demanding the release of the two men principally concerned in the assault, and now lodged in Elmton jail on the charge of murder.

The excitement was manifestly increasing fast, and Lord and Lady Elmshire besought her to come and stay with them at the Castle, hardly deeming it safe for her to remain at the Hall unprotected. But she refused, with warm and repeated thanks, averring that she considered it her duty to remain at her post; and with infinite reluctance they were forced to consent, driving over, however, most days to see how matters fared with her.

Perhaps if she had not had all these irritations and distractions, Christian might have dwelt more than even was the case on Hyacinth's gradually-shortening letters—might have observed that there was more in them than met the eye.

As we have already said, she was oppressed at times with an uneasy sensation that something was amiss, though her

fears had pictured nothing deeper than some slight exhibition of Lindsay's selfishness, or the natural fatigue of such a round of gayety to one so little inured to dissipation.

Hyacinth had mentioned Wilfred Lambert's return from America, and his name had frequently occurred in her letters since, so that when, the day after his departure from London, he made his appearance at Ettrick, Christian felt she should have ample tidings of her sister, and welcomed him with corresponding warmth. Wilfred hardly knew how to answer her questions. Convinced that, situated as she was, with an inattentive husband openly devoted to another woman, Hyacinth must before very long turn to him and reciprocate his feelings, he had also perceived that Hyacinth's arrival alone with him at her own door had not been unobserved, and argued from it that the tidings would reach Sir Lindsay's ears, that he would upbraid his wife, whose high spirit would immediately retort, and that a breach would be the result. He bitterly cursed his folly in having allowed himself to be tempted into speaking during that drive. He felt his position would have been infinitely stronger had he waited until Sir Lindsay had roused her wrath.

Christian hardly knew what to make of his answers. He did not want to tell her anything she had not already heard, and was amazed at how very little Hyacinth seemed to have told her, observing with especial surprise that Mrs. Marsfield's name had no particular interest for her, proving very clearly that Hyacinth had concealed the part that lady played in her life.

Altogether, when he was gone, Christian, sitting musing over all he had said, came to the conclusion that he had told her nothing she did not already know. But when he called again a week later (he was so anxious for tidings of the woman he so ardently worshiped, that but for fear that his visits might be reported to her, and might put her on her guard, he would have appeared at Ettrick every day) he heard news that greatly excited him.

"Hyacinth has left London," were Christian's first words. "Was she unwell when you saw her? She talks of sea-bathing; and I suppose it must be that, or she would have come here."

So there had evidently been the commotion he had antici-

pated—he would give something to know the rights of it. He answered quietly,—

"When I last saw Lady Ettrick, she appeared in blooming health; but this tropical heat may easily account for her being knocked up. Where is she going?"

"She has gone to her sister-in-law, Mrs. St. Orbe, at Rockcliffe," replied Christian; "but it seems to me very strange Lindsay has stayed in London."

"Perhaps Lady Ettrick's stay is to be very short?"

"No; she talks of remaining till they go to Scotland. I can't understand his letting her go alone."

"Nor I," thought Wilfred, speculating for a moment on the strange dispensation that causes people to despise the treasure they possess, and to vow that, when once he could call this particular treasure his own, such should not be his case. Then he said, "Oh! doubtless Sir Lindsay was overwhelmed with engagements; and you know how unselfish your sister is—she was sure to insist on his staying to fulfill them."

"Dear Hyacinth, yes. She never thinks of herself," said Christian, fondly.

But long after Wilfred had quitted her, she strolled up and down the terrace, trying to persuade herself that there was nothing wrong, that it was the most natural thing in the world that Lindsay should remain to amuse himself in town while his wife was banished to Rockcliffe for bathing. Once or twice, as she turned at the end of the terrace nearest the wood, she almost fancied that she could discern the forms of one or two men lurking among the trees. She stopped and looked earnestly, but could not feel sure. Still the impression was strong enough to induce her, when she entered the house, to ring, and desire that the shutters might be closed at once, instead of being left open, as usual, until she retired for the night.

It was a sultry, oppressive night, and the order, for which she gave no reason, evidently surprised the butler considerably. She sat down to read, but thoughts of Hyacinth, presentiments of evil befalling her, would distract her mind, until she grew so convinced something was wrong, that she felt that she must start the next day for Rockcliffe, and reassure herself.

She was surprised too and disappointed at having had no visit or line from Laurence. This was the day of the trial of the two men at Elmton for the murder of the non-unionist,

and she had expected to hear the result from him. However, having waited till eleven o'clock, she decided that there was nothing to be expected that night, and retired to rest.

The trial had been a long one, and had resulted in the conviction and sentence of the two offenders. Laurence had fully intended to carry the intelligence to Christian, and was considerably annoyed to find that Lord Elmton had made an engagement for them both to dine with some friends in the town. He half thought of declining, and of making his way back to Ettrick, but Lord Elmton remonstrated so much that he gave way. The dinner was a pleasant one; and it was nearly one in the morning before they bid their hosts farewell, and got into the dog-cart.

It was a still, oppressive July night, without a breath of wind to stir the thick foliage; the scent of the meadow-sweet by the roadside, and of the roses and clematis in the cottage gardens, seemed to load the air with perfume; while every here and there a lime-tree contributed its delicious fragrance. It was not a night to talk, and hardly a word was spoken as they drove along, the horses' hoofs making the only sound in the dead stillness. Their road led them within a mile of Ettrick, where they had to turn off to Rose Bank and the Castle, and before they reached the turning, Lord Elmton suddenly exclaimed,—

"I say, what an odd smell of burning!"

"Burning weeds, I suppose," suggested Laurence, dreamily.

"Weeds! my dear fellow—hardly, before the corn is cut."

And before Laurence could reply, the groom pointed to a strange lurid light upon the trees, and said,—

"If you please, my lord, it must be a fire at Ettrick."

"A fire at Ettrick! The conviction that day! This must be the revenge of the unionists!"

Such were the thoughts that filled the young men's minds as they drove at the top of their speed in the direction of the fire, which it was but too plain was rapidly increasing.

As they reached the lodge, and stopped to awake the lodge-keeper, with infinite difficulty, it was plain that the fire was rapidly obtaining the mastery.

"There is no hope of saving the house," said Lord Elmton. "Not a man near; and yet with that lake we could do wonders, if we only had the labor."

"Let us save her!" cried Laurence, in a husky voice, that, even at such a time, struck his friend as peculiar.

It was evident that no one had yet been awakened. The servants' rooms were in a wing apart, which the fire had not yet reached, and evidently nothing had yet disturbed them, although ominous tongues of flame were beginning to lick the walls of their wing, and to leap from the windows of the main block of the house.

There was evidently no time to be lost. With a hurried order to the groom to drive as fast as he could to the Castle, and send assistance, Lord Elmton ran to the servants' wing, and with a blow of a post which was lying near, for the manufacture of some railings, burst in a window, and proceeded to awaken the servants. But when awake they were too scared and frightened to be of any use, and it was with infinite difficulty that he discovered which was Christian's room, and was able to make them understand that anything that was to be saved must be saved at once, while he ran back to Laurence's assistance.

Laurence had made his way into the drawing-room, in much the same fashion as Lord Elmton had made his into the servants' wing, and, crossing the room, had hoped to reach the stairs and rescue the young mistress of the house, but the moment he opened the door a sight met his eyes that forbade approach in that quarter. The staircase was one mass of flame, and the air from the drawing-room window catching it, it became momentarily more intense and impassable.

"Which is her window?" cried Laurence, as he leaped out again on to the terrace, and Lord Elmton pointed to a window happily somewhat removed from the thickest of the flames, though still in imminent peril.

Lord Elmton flew for a ladder, while Laurence endeavored to awaken her by throwing stones against the window, but in vain. The ladder was brought, reared against the wall, and, after Laurence had mounted but a very few rungs, broke short off, precipitating him heavily to the ground; it had been carefully sawn in two. At this moment a light was visible in the room; it was evident that the flames were approaching the door.

"There is not a moment to be lost! It must be the smoke that has stupefied her," cried Laurence; and, swinging himself

up the branches of a neighboring oak, he contrived, by a daring leap, to spring on the window-ledge, to break and open the window, and to make his way into the room. It was full of stifling smoke, and the roar of the flames was plainly audible.

Laying Christian on the sofa, utterly insensible from the suffocating smoke, he hastily tore the bed-clothes into strips, knotted them firmly together, and fastened them round her waist; then, throwing out the mattress, he proceeded to lower her gently to where Lord Elmton stood to receive her.

His succor came none too soon. Before she safely touched the ground the flames had burst into the room, and were streaming like a banner from the window. Laurence's own retreat was the next thing to be thought of. The branch by which he had ascended would not help him now; a second ladder which Lord Elmton had brought had proved to have been tampered with like the first; to leap from the window was certain death; the flames were momentarily gaining upon him. There seemed but one escape. Fastening the knotted rope which had saved Christian to the leg of the heavy oak writing-table, he got out on the window-ledge, and gradually lowered himself hand over hand; but his weight was greater than hers, and he had not progressed far when a knot gave way, and he fell heavily to the ground, striking his head against one of the ruined ladders.

All this occurred far more rapidly than it can be described. At length Lord Elmton's shouts brought one or two of the servants, and Christian, who was still insensible, and Laurence, who had given no sign of consciousness, were carried to Mr. Margesson's house, that gentleman having just appeared upon the scene, only half awake, and too bewildered to be of much use.

Ettrick had no fire-engine, and even had there been a plentiful staff armed with buckets at their disposal, it was too late for any good to have been effected when Lord Elmton and Laurence first made their appearance. It may seem marvelous that a large house could thus be consumed without any alarm being given, but Ettrick was situated in a very solitary part of the country, and was too much shut in by its own trees and woods to be visible from any portion of the neighborhood. If it had not been for Lord Elmton's determination to remain and dine with his friend, it is more than

probable that not one who that night retired to rest at Ettrick Hall would have woke again.

Lord Elmton's first act, when his two patients were under the agent's roof, was to send one of the grooms off at once for medical advice; after which he directed him to go to the chief constable, state the circumstances, and request that some police might be sent to keep order and protect the property.

The man had hardly started when the roof fell with a crash, and, after a momentary lull, the flames were more violent than ever. Even in his perturbation and anxiety, Lord Elmton could not help noticing the curious effects of the flame, which lit up the whole lake and the ruined Abbey; and the contrast of the early dawn, which was fast breaking, and paling the ruddy glare. As he was watching it the old butler touched his arm, and pointed into the darkness.

"What is it?" said Lord Elmton; and the man answered in a whisper,—

"People watching, my lord," replied the old man.

"Impossible! Watching and not helping! You must be mistaken." And Lord Elmton advanced towards the wood, and exclaimed—"If there are any men in that wood, let them come out and help, not skulk like cowards." But there was no response, although he saw various forms stealing off in the twilight.

Very soon Lord and Lady Elmshire made their appearance, having driven over the moment they had been aroused, on the groom's arrival of the intelligence of the fire, and anxious to carry off Christian out of sight and hearing of her misfortunes. Lady Elmshire went to her at once, hearing she was at length awakening from her stupor, while Lord Elmshire remained to hear all his son had to tell him. Both suspected the disaster to be the work of incendiaries, in revenge for the sentence that day passed upon their comrades, and for the speech wherein Christian had reproached and called them cowards, which speech was known to have been the text for much vituperation and inflammatory language among the delegates.

"It is as well you thought of the police," said Lord Elmshire. "The cowards who could watch a house burning, and never offer to help, are pretty sure to be thieves as well. But one thing strikes me with astonishment, which is, that the

house should have blazed up like so much tinder. The butler says he was not in bed till close upon twelve. You must have been here very little after two; it is not half-past three now; it is incomprehensible."

But when the ruins were searched the mystery was explained, for two men—one a delegate from Elmton, who had been formost in his denunciations of Christian's reductions in his inflammatory speeches; and the other, one of the workmen on the farm—both were found crushed under the fallen roof, each still clutching in one hand a large can which had held petroleum, and having a spirit-bottle in the other. There was no further need to wonder at the strange rapidity with which the flames had spread; the whole sad story was too plainly revealed.

When once Christian's consciousness began to return she recovered rapidly, and poured forth innumerable questions as to where she was, and what had happened. Lady Elmshire was a sufficiently wise woman to tell her the whole story, calmly and quietly, at once, instead of worrying her by those injunctions not to ask questions, and assurances that nothing was the matter, so aggravating to any one just struggling back to consciousness. Christian sobbed hysterically for a few minutes, then she looked up and said,—

"And how did I get here?"

"Mr. Courtray saved you," said Lady Elmshire, who had heard that fact, and nothing more, respecting Laurence. "If you will try to rest a little, I will go and see what further information I can pick up."

Left alone, Christian's first thought was to return fervent thanks for her deliverance from a horrible death; and then she lay back, her face hidden in her hands, every pulse throbbing with the thought that *he* had saved her. He, whose words had of late been so much more to her than those of any other had ever been; he on whom she had unconsciously formed her ideal of all that was great and good in man; he with whom, in short, she was so fervently in love, although until this moment not a suspicion of it had dawned upon her. Not a trace remained of all her old foolish fancies that marriage was degradation to a woman, and other cognate absurdities. She only felt that she loved with all her strength. She shuddered to think that her love might not be returned.

CHAPTER XXX.

> "But I am constant as the Northern Star,
> Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament."
>
> *Julius Cæsar.*

When Wilfred Lambert left Christian, possessed of the information that Hyacinth was at Rockcliffe, he was greatly puzzled as to what he should do. If he only knew in what frame of mind she had left London! If he could but tell whether her indignation had been roused by Sir Lindsay's reproaches, or whether he had sent her to Rockcliffe in disgrace! On the whole, this solution seemed the more probable; if Lady Ettrick had left town entirely of her own free will, she would almost certainly have come to her sister, instead of going to her sister-in-law. If such were the case—and her going to Rockcliffe seemed to him to show pretty plainly that it was so—surely her proud spirit must be fairly roused—surely now would be the time for him once more to approach her.

Of ultimate victory Wilfred never doubted; he had a very comfortable reliance on his own powers of fascination; he argued that young, high-spirited, and neglected Hyacinth must soon learn to hate her husband, and that then his long, unvarying attachment must incline her favorably towards him. He had not the mind to conceive, the power to fathom a love that, however coldly neglected and roughly repelled, was still firmly fixed on the one adored object. His early life had not been spent among pure and good women; his mother, as we have said, had died at his birth, and his father's associates of both sexes had been selected rather for their social qualities and powers of amusing than for their sterling worth or high moral character. As a natural consequence, he had anything but an exalted opinion of the female sex; those members of it whom he had known the most intimately in his early youth were bad, while those who had been his most constant, because most congenial, acquaintances, were for the most part cold and worldly, and utterly incapable of such a depth of affection as that which Hyacinth felt for Lindsay.

Such a love, as we have said, Wilfred could not fathom, and, that important element being omitted from his calculations, he saw nothing that did not promise favorably for his hopes—indeed, of ultimate failure he never dreamed; his only doubt was whether it would be wisest to wait, or to approach Hyacinth at once, while she was still smarting under the recollection of Sir Lindsay's reproaches. He spent a whole day in indecision, and then, his impatience to see her once more getting the better of him, started for Rockcliffe.

Since the passage of arms with her sister-in-law, in which she had got so decidedly the worst of it, Mrs. St. Orbe had refrained from any further recommendation of Mr. Bates and his ministrations. The ladies met but seldom, for her own house was the last place in which Mrs. St. Orbe was to be found; she had taken up church work and district visiting as an excitement—as something to replace the constant society and round of dissipation which were now beyond her reach, and had thrown herself into them with as much energy and enthusiasm as she would have displayed in a season of balls and concerts, Prince's and parties such as that through which her sister-in-law had just passed. Also, although not precisely what is commonly called a flirt, she fully appreciated the homage of the opposite sex, and it is very doubtful indeed whether district visiting would have had any charms for her, had it not been for the excitement of the constant meetings with Mr. Bates or with one of his curates. She had taken supreme command of the school, and dearly loved the compliments paid to her on the efficiency due really to the mistress; she attended the choir practicings, and fondly believed that it was she, and not the organist, who trained the singers; she was so fully imbued with the idea of her own importance in the polity of the "Church of our Blessed Lady" as to be utterly oblivious of the fact that her domestic duties were entirely neglected.

It was well for the St. Orbe children that their father was what he was, for he had to perform a mother's as well as a father's part. Henry St. Orbe believed firmly and loyally in his wife, and never dreamed of excitement or love of admiration as the motive of her devotion to Mr. Bates. He was not a clever or a very strong-minded man, but he was thoroughly honest and true himself, and it never occurred to him to sus-

pect others of being the reverse. Essentially charitable and kind-hearted, he was never heard to say an ill-natured thing of any one, always giving the benefit of a doubt where one was possible, and turning the conversation if it were not. It was from him that his children derived all the softening and elevating influences of their lives, their mother being too much occupied ever apparently to give them a thought, excepting when she took the elder ones with her to the daily services.

With the aid of the masters who visited Rockcliffe during its brief season, Henry St. Orbe taught his children himself, and strove to find in the interest of forming their tastes and habits of thought a compensation for the disappointment he experienced in his wife's utter want of companionship and sympathy. He did his utmost to make her interests his own, and to share her pursuits; but he soon found that he was not wanted. His common sense, and the knowledge of the world acquired during his army career, caused him occasionally to take very different views of parish matters—more especially as regarded the distribution of charity—from those popular not only with his wife, but also with the curates; and it was quickly made plain to him that Mrs. St. Orbe preferred her own judgment, and that of her spiritual guides, to the advice of her proper lord and master.

With a gentleness that was perhaps unfortunate, but that was a strong feature in his character, Henry St. Orbe gave way, and allowed his wife to pursue her own course, devoting himself more and more to the children; and in them he had his reward, for they simply adored him, and were docile to his lightest word. Their mother was more or less a stranger to them—all the little confidences and confessions usually sacred to a mother's ear were poured out to their father, and received from him a genial sympathy they would certainly have lacked from Mrs. St. Orbe.

To a man of Captain St. Orbe's tender heart and sympathetic nature, his sister-in-law's evident depression was very distressing. Although all he had heard of the disagreement between her and her husband had been told him by his wife, and had therefore been of a nature adverse to Hyacinth, he had his own ideas on the subject; and, aided considerably by his knowledge of Lindsay's character, had formed a tolerably correct notion of the real state of affairs, though he felt that

his acquaintance with Hyacinth was as yet too slight to enable him to take any steps towards effecting a reconciliation. He was fully convinced that any imprudence of which she might have been guilty was due to inexperience rather than to the "levity" of which his wife spoke in such terms of reprobation; and was infinitely more disposed to blame Lindsay for neglect than his wife for giddiness.

"As if you knew any of the circumstances," said Mrs. St. Orbe, when he intimated as much, forgetting that she was herself almost entirely in the dark.

Henry St. Orbe pitied the sorrow so plainly depicted on his guest's countenance, and would have given much to be of any comfort or solace to her; but he felt that their acquaintance was too short to enable him to be of any service; so he confined himself to anticipating any wish he thought she could form, and keeping any possible annoyance from her. He soon found that what she liked best was to be left to wander alone to some sequestered nook in the cliffs, and there to remain, frequently for the entire day, and he guarded her from any attempt of the children to break in upon her solitude. They would willingly have accompanied the new aunt, whose pretty face and gentle manner had such charms for them; but Hyacinth was little disposed for their company. Each day, as it dawned, found her more and more depressed and unhappy—the separation from Lindsay was in itself agony to her; but to think of him angry and displeased, although his displeasure seemed to her most unjust, was misery almost greater than she could bear.

Then, too, she was a prey to raging jealousy. She knew that while she was crying her eyes out among the rocks at Rockcliffe, her husband was passing long hours in the society of the rival who had made her so unhappy during that most wretched summer. She felt grateful to Henry St. Orbe for his kindness, and more especially for the true tact that left her entirely alone. Her chief haunt was the island which, as we have mentioned, was attainable at low water from the rocks at one extremity of the bay. It was not a very favorite resort with the tourists, with whom Rockcliffe was rapidly filling, for the mammas were not fond of leaving the esplanade, where they could amuse themselves by criticising their neighbors; and the nurses were afraid of being surrounded and impris-

oned on the island, while their charges infinitely preferred castle-building on the sands.

So Hyacinth found herself almost entirely undisturbed, and there were few days that she did not find her way to her favorite seat, a sheltered nook below the solitary clump of firs, where she could enjoy an unequaled view of the bay, the wooded heights, and the far-stretching sea. It was very common for her to find her way to this seat directly after breakfast, if the tide permitted, and to remain there the entire day —indeed, when once the island was cut off from the mainland, an imprisonment of four hours was inevitable. She liked the feeling of utter solitude, the certainty that by no possibility could she be disturbed. And there, with her head on her hand, and her eyes seeing, but hardly perceiving, the beauties before her—the changing colors of waves and sky, the gorgeous hues of sunset, or the dark threatening of a coming storm—she would sit for hours: thinking of Lindsay, torturing herself with conjectures as to what he was doing, weeping bitter tears that he had ceased to care for her. For it seemed to her that he must have done so; she had been a fortnight at Rockcliffe, and he had never once vouchsafed an answer to her repeated letters. It was true that she knew that he regarded letter-writing as a deadly penance, still one line could hardly have been a great grievance, if he cared for her.

When would her banishment end? Her anger at his injustice was dying away before the agony of her grief at their separation and estrangement; it seemed wonderful to her now how she could have answered him so hotly in her fierce indignation—how differently would she act now, could she but have the blessed chance of seeing him! He might upbraid her as he would, and she would answer never a word, save to implore him to love her, to care for her as he had once done.

Ah! those happy days, spent in such utter bliss among the Dolomite peaks! How the rugged forms rose before her eyes through the blinding tears, and brought fond memories of gentle words and tender caresses, to which she had now long been a stranger; for Lindsay, though really very fond of her, had grown careless of the demonstrations of affection so precious to a woman's heart.

Again and again, with agonizing iteration, she passed in review every incident of their acquaintance with Mrs. Marsfield,

believing that she saw in it the re-awakening of an old love of Lindsay's, instead of, as was really the case, the attraction of a man fond of being amused and made much of by a woman insatiable in her desire for admiration, more especially if, in attaining it, she could compass the mortification of another woman.

Poor Hyacinth was too utterly guileless to understand such a character as Mrs. Marsfield's; she might well have spared herself the torture of imagining real love as existing between her and Lindsay. She could not bear to look forward to the future, all seemed such a sad and dreary blank; for if Lindsay had ceased to care for her, what had she left to live for?—and, as the usual end of her meditations, came a tempest of tears and sobs.

One very hot morning Hyacinth betook herself, as usual, to her favorite spot. The tide was rising, and in another half-hour she would be separated from the rest of the world for four whole hours. There was something in this sense of isolation that she enjoyed. Once alone on her island, no one could by any possibility see her tears. The morning was oppressively hot; a silvery haze hung over the intense calm of the sea, and formed a thin veil over the wooded heights; the sea-gulls rose and fell on the tiny ripples, and seemed too lazy to take wing; the voices of the children on the sands were hushed, for the intense heat had driven all in-doors for shelter from the noontide sun. Not a breath was stirring, and not a sound was to be heard, save the lazy plash of the rising tide.

Hyacinth half sat, half lay, on the soft turf, in the shadow of a projecting rock; above her rose the red trunks of the Scotch firs, and before her lay a small grassy platform, the edge of which fell in a sheer wall of rock to the sea, a height of some twenty feet. She had thrown herself on the grass, the book which she invariably brought, but rarely opened, lying neglected by her side, and she gazed at, without seeing, the clusters of yellow sea-holly and tufts of pink thrift that grew on the edge of the small platform. As usual, her thoughts were far away, picturing Lindsay at Prince's, with Mrs. Marsfield, or riding with her under the trees; and as she thought of him, the ready tears welled up into her eyes, and her heart ached and hungered for one word from him—one sign that she was not forgotten.

How long she had sat there looking out to sea through blinding tears she never knew. She suddenly became aware of some one standing beside her, and hastily dashing away her tears, and sitting upright, found herself face to face with—Wilfred Lambert. Nothing that could have happened could so thoroughly have amazed her, or have rendered her so indignant. He should have understood—she had imagined that he did understand—that, after the manner in which he had insulted her, they must never again meet, that he must never presume again to approach or to address her. And yet here he was having followed her to Rockcliffe; for no other motive, she well knew, could have brought him to such an out-of-the-way spot; and not only that, but he had contrived to entrap her into a situation whence there could be no escape for several hours. It was base, cowardly, ungentlemanlike, and she rose to move to the other side of the tiny island, so as to give unequivocal signs of her view of his conduct. But as she was passing him, without even a glance, he caught her hand.

"Hyacinth! Hyacinth! for the love of heaven speak to me!"

She turned upon him at once.

"Mr. Lambert, I am at a loss to conceive by what right you take the liberty of calling me by my name. Nothing in our acquaintance warrants such an impertinence."

He colored deeply at her words; her tone was so cold and haughty he would hardly have known the voice as hers.

"Lady Ettrick," he said, in a low voice, "forgive me for following you here, but life without you is valueless and unendurable. Ever since I first saw you I have loved you, as I never believed I could love woman. It was a blow such as you cannot in the very faintest degree realize, when I returned home to find you the wife of another. Had I been wise I should have fled at once, but I could not tear myself away from your fatal fascination; every hour that I spent in your society riveted my chains more and more firmly. And when I saw you unhappy, when I saw you neglected for one so immeasurably your inferior, I dared to hope that some day my constancy might be rewarded. I ventured to tell you this that night coming from Richmond, but you were nervous, and startled, and would not listen to me. But I do not despair; love such as mine must win its way. You must—you shall yet be mine!"

Indignation, surprise, bewilderment deprived Hyacinth of speech, and, after a moment's pause, he continued,—

"Surely you can never forgive Sir Lindsay for sending you away here in disgrace, calling the attention of the world to the scandal of your separation, while he passes all his time in the company of your rival. Hyacinth, hear me. Be mine, and I swear to you that my devotion shall be such as women rarely indeed receive—that it shall last my life!"

He seized her hands, and held them pressed as in a vice. She struggled for a moment to release them, then stood quite still, as she said, coldly,—

"Mr. Lambert, I have already told you I consider your presence here an impertinence. The words you have forced me to listen to are an insult such as I neither can nor will forgive. I answered you once, when you forgot yourself so strangely on our return from Richmond. No gentleman would have required a second expression of my feelings. But since you insist upon it, let me tell you that, if it were possible for you to fall lower in my esteem than you did that night, you have now done so. The man who could follow a defenseless woman to a lonely spot like this, for the purpose of pouring his unwelcome speeches into her ears, must be a coward of the deepest dye."

As she spoke, all the bad passions of Wilfred's nature rose hot within him. To love as he had never dreamed it possible that he could do, and then to find himself despised, maligned, reviled! He seized her wrist, this time in no gentle clasp.

"Think what you do, Lady Ettrick. Remember I have your good name in my power. Remember the long hours we spent together that night at Richmond; think what a pretty tale may be made of our meeting here. Promise me some hope, or I swear you shall rue the day you crossed my path!"

So intent were they on their conversation that they had never noticed the sudden change in the weather—the inky clouds obscuring the heavens, the leaden sea, the fitful moaning of the rising wind. Every now and then a huge raindrop fell, a presage of what was coming, and the sullen muttering of thunder might have been heard in the distance. But just as Wilfred uttered his threat a blinding flash, followed by a deafening peal, startled even them, and Hyacinth,

nervously terrified of thunder at all times, shuddered as she replied, in a defiant tone,—

"I said you were no gentleman to follow me here, where I have no means of escape from your persecution. I say now you have proved my words by your threat of bearing false witness against me. I bitterly regret the day we ever met. From this hour forth, Mr. Lambert, we meet as strangers."

As she spoke, she turned, to put the greatest distance of which the small circumference of the island permitted between them; but as she was about to turn the point of rock, and looked back at the platform where Wilfred stood, as if stupefied at her vehemence, the heavens seemed literally to open, she saw him fall to the ground, and was herself struck senseless to the earth. With this culminating flash, the rain came down in torrents, and in a very few seconds Hyacinth was drenched to the skin, as she lay unconscious on the ground. When she revived the storm had passed away; the only traces of it were the masses of heavy clouds that here and there cast purple shadows on the sparkling sunlit sea.

Hyacinth had no recollection of what had occurred—she felt dazed and stupid, and unable to account for her dripping condition. Stiff and shivering, she endeavored to rise, and in so doing caught sight of Wilfred lying, as he had fallen, on the grass a few yards distant. In an instant the whole situation flashed back into her mind, strangely coupled with a vivid recollection of that other island, whereon, in happier days, they had been imprisoned. But why did he lie so still?—could he be much hurt?—could he?—she could not frame the awful thought, but rose and went to him. Even to one so inexperienced, to one who had never looked on death before, it required no second glance to tell her that all was over, and with a sudden access of horror she rushed from the spot. As fast as her trembling limbs would carry her, she made her way down to the sand. She must have been a long time on the island, for it was hard and firm. Almost the first person she encountered was her brother-in-law.

"I could not resist coming to see after you," he said. "What shelter had you in that desperate storm? Not much, evidently, by your dripping condition. But, good heavens, Hyacinth, what is the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"There is a dead man lying there," said Hyacinth, her teeth chattering, as, her trembling limbs failing to support her, she sank to the ground. Then, seeing that Captain St. Orbe looked at her, as if doubting her sanity, she continued: "It was the lightning. I was struck too, and my head feels all dazed and stupid. It was Mr. Lambert. He came to speak to me. Won't you go to him?"

"Not till I see you safe," said Henry St. Orbe, decidedly; and calling two boatmen, he hurriedly gave them some directions, and then, taking Hyacinth, who had become almost unconscious, in his arms, he carried her to a fly, and ordered the man to drive rapidly to the Villa, calling at the doctor's house *en route*.

"A mere shock—intense quiet necessary," was the doctor's fiat; and Henry St. Orbe took good care the quiet was preserved.

As soon as Hyacinth had been cared for, he and the doctor went towards the island, and met the boatmen carrying Wilfred along the shore. One glance was sufficient to tell that all must have been over instantaneously; and he was borne on to the lodgings he had left in the morning so full of health and strength. Voluble was Mrs. St. Orbe's amazement when the story was imparted to her. Then, after all, Lady Ettrick had been merely making use of them! No wonder that she liked to stay out for hours in that very strange way, if all the time she was having *tête-à-têtes* with her lover. No wonder that she shrunk from the very thought of seeing Mr. Bates, and of confessing her sins.

But here her husband interposed.

"Ursula, I am ashamed of you!" And as she stared at him, unaccustomed to such language, he continued, "What right have you to harbor injurious suspicions against your sister-in-law? Is this the charity that should form so conspicuous a part of the character of one so given to religious profession as you are? For my own part, I am as convinced that Lady Ettrick is more sinned against than sinning, as I am that the sun is sinking in the west. Thoughtless she may be, inconsiderate and giddy she may have been, but I feel as sure as that I stand here that she is as pure and as guileless as our own Bridget; and I wish Lindsay were here, that I might tell him so."

It was so seldom that Henry St. Orbe roused himself that his wife listened to him in amazement. It was not in her to see things in his broad and generous light, and she somewhat resented his championship of Hyacinth, which she assigned entirely to his strange appreciation of her good looks. Still, she knew that when once his mind was made up he could be very determined, and was well aware that he would not tolerate any of her sharp speeches; so she kept out of Hyacinth's way and recouped herself by lamenting Lady Ettrick's sins to the most austere of the curates of St. Mary's.

Hyacinth's constitution was a robust one, or the shock and exposure would have had worse effects. She was slightly delirious the first night, and was confined to her bed for three or four days with a severe feverish cold, but these consequences were slight compared with those the doctor had anticipated. Brain fever, nervous fever, rheumatic fever, either or all of these he had fully expected, and he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his patient fairly established on the drawing-room sofa within ten days of the catastrophe.

But having progressed so far, Hyacinth got no further; she was terribly weak, and utterly listless, and lay for hours without speaking or moving, and with her eyes fixed on vacancy. She was wondering why Lindsay did not come to her—did not even write. Could he be so very angry with her? The very first day of her illness she had set the doctor at defiance, and had insisted on writing to her husband, to tell him the whole story. Henry St. Orbe had also written, but to neither letter had there been any answer. The letters had been directed to Park Street, and must have reached their destination. No information could be gained from Mrs. Ettrick, who had started the week before on an expedition to Schwalbach. Captain St. Orbe thought sometimes of running up to London, and bringing Lindsay back with him; but he was of an indolent disposition, and kept putting off the occasion from day to day.

The inquest had duly taken place; a distant cousin, Wilfred's successor at Stanham, had come down, and the funeral had taken place at Rockcliffe, in the quietest possible manner. Hyacinth had asked about it. Captain St. Orbe would willingly have avoided the subject, but she asked him at once if

her evidence would be required, and seemed unspeakably relieved when she heard that, under the circumstances, the doctor could afford all the necessary information.

The papers were carefully kept out of her way. It had been impossible to keep such a catastrophe out of them, and it was copied into the London ones with painful accuracy of detail. The knowledge of this, at any rate, Henry St. Orbe was determined she should be spared; he knew well what mischief would be made of it, and at length determined to shake off his indolence, and seek Lindsay himself. But when he reached the house in Park Street it was shut up, and when, after long ringing, he succeeded in unearthing the old woman in charge, her information was far from satisfactory. Sir Lindsay had left the house the Friday before Goodwood, the very day on which the accident had occurred. Some of the servants had been discharged—the rest were gone to their friends for a holiday, but were to be at Glen Ettrick in time for the shooting. All letters were sent to Sir Lindsay's club; she knew no more.

To the club Captain St. Orbe betook himself, but there was no information to be obtained. Sir Lindsay had directed that his letters should be kept till he sent his address, and, as he had not yet done so, a somewhat formidable pile was awaiting him—among them, as Captain St. Orbe saw, his own letter, and two of Hyacinth's.

As he was walking slowly away, it struck him that Hyacinth had mentioned Lindsay's intention of going to Goodwood with the Marsfields; perhaps some tidings might be obtained of him at their house, and he was soon standing at Lord Cottington's door; but here he was not destined to be more successful. Lord Cottington was at Marsfield, Mr. and Mrs. Marsfield were gone "somewhere abroad," was all the information that the housemaid could give him; and, foiled at all points, he turned sorrowfully away, and returned to Rockcliffe, little wiser than when he left it.

It proved, however, an immense relief to Hyacinth to find that Lindsay had never received her letter; half her misery had been caused by his having failed to reply to her explanations, and if he had never received it, this cause of sorrow fell to the ground. Henry St. Orbe felt amply repaid for the hot and tiring day's work, when he saw his sister-in-law's coun-

tenance brighten, and her eyes lose their melancholy vacancy, as she held out her hand and thanked him heartily for what he had done for her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"She said,
Brokenly, that she knew it; she had failed
In sweet humility, had failed in all;
That all her labor was but as a block
Left in the quarry.
* * * * * * * * *
"She pray'd me not to judge their cause from her
That wrong'd it, sought far less for truth than power
In knowledge; something wild within her breast,
A greater than all knowledge, beat her down.
And she had nursed me there from week to week:
Much had she learnt in little time."

The Princess.

LADY ELMSHIRE reporting that Christian was on the high road to recovery, the doctor, when he arrived, was at once taken to the room where Laurence Courtray had been laid. He still continued unconscious, but Dr. Robson did not attach very much importance to that; he examined the other injuries, which were found to consist of a dislocated wrist and broken arm, and the pain consequent on setting the latter caused the patient to moan, to move uneasily, and finally to open his eyes, and inquire where he was and what was the matter. Catching sight of Lord Elmton, his recollection returned, and in an anxious tone he asked,—

"Christian—Miss Ettrick—she is safe, is she not?"

"Safe, thanks to you, my dear fellow," said Lord Elmshire. "I only wish you had not suffered so much in your heroic endeavors. The blackguards! to think of their cutting the ladders!—such cold-blooded malignity, and standing by, too, to see people burned to death! I'm ashamed of the county. Nothing would have made me believe that even trades-unionists would have been so cowardly, if I hadn't seen it. Job Dyce, too, who has worked on the farm for thirty years and more, to have been led away to soak the house with petroleum, like

a French communist! Well, after all, trades-unionism, as the roughs understand it, is very like communism, and red-republicanism too; the sooner it is stamped out, like the cattle plague, the better."

Laurence gave a faint smile; he had often argued this very subject with Lord Elmshire, being himself imbued with the liberal and somewhat visionary ideas common to young men of enlightened views and generous dispositions, and it amused him to think what an additional argument his old friend would now have in support of his conservative opinions. But the pain was too great for amusement long to hold a place in his thoughts, and he was soon sleeping heavily, under the influence of a strong anodyne.

Christian would fain have set forth to see the ruins of her home, but she was more shaken by the shock than she had herself any idea of, and was soon forced to admit that the sofa was the only place suitable to her. She was greatly distressed at hearing of Laurence's injuries; she had known, on the first throb of delight at learning that it was to him she owed her life, what her feelings towards him really were, and mourned bitterly that he should have been hurt in her service.

Lady Elmshire quickly perceived how matters were with her young friend, and suspected that Laurence had a more than common interest in her; but she was discretion itself, and did not let Christian perceive her discovery. In the afternoon she carried her off to the Castle, sorely, it must be confessed, against her will, for Christian would much have preferred to remain under the same roof that sheltered Laurence. It was, of course, however, quite impossible for her to say so, and besides, the doctor held out hopes that he too might be able to be moved the ensuing day.

The burning of Ettrick was a sore and terrible blow to her, not only from her sorrow at losing the home endeared to her by the recollections of a whole life, but infinitely more from the thought that she had been robbed of that home by her own people—by those whom she had done all in her power to benefit and assist. How she deplored her own folly in despising advice, and taking her own course in the previous autumn, without which, in all probability, Elmshire would have remained what it had always been, an eminently contented county. She felt, in her present shaken and nervous state, as if the blood

of the two men lying under sentence of death at Elmton, and of the two who had met their fate while preparing the way for the flames at Ettrick, was on her head, for without her headstrong folly the circumstances would never have arisen to which they owed their end, and she gradually worked herself up into a perfect agony of remorse.

Lady Elmshire had insisted on her retiring early to rest, and during the long hours of the night she wept bitter tears over her folly and its melancholy consequences. She saw clearly, as she could never have believed it possible that she should see, that social matters had been better ordered by time and the collective wisdom of generations than she could ever hope to order them, and resolved that this should be a lesson to her for the rest of her life, to trust the judgment of others rather than her own.

Poor Christian!—her awakening had been indeed a rude one. The shame of finding herself prominently on the platform when Miss Bang held forth in a manner offensive to propriety, and subversive of both religion and morality, the mortification of finding that all the high-sounding phrases and plausible arguments that had appeared to her so convincing, led but to this most distressing consummation, and of discovering that Dr. Barker, Miss Sophonisba Jinks, and all the paraphernalia of the Society for the Emancipation of Women had been nothing more than a scheme to extort money, was a terrible blow!

It was most humiliating to have been so deceived! At any other time it would have made her very angry to think of the check, which she had given in all good faith, having been so skillfully exchanged by Dr. Barker for a five-pound note; but she was too miserable, too ashamed of herself, to feel as if she could ever be angry again.

Besides the weight of positive remorse, the thought would recur that, if by her folly she had not disturbed the peace of the county, and led indirectly to the burning of Ettrick, Laurence would not now have been suffering as he was. What must he think of her? How unfeminine, how foolish and wrong-headed, she must appear to him! Yet how gentle he had always been to her, how careful not to wound her sensitive and absurd pride by the ridicule that she so richly deserved, but which he knew she so dreaded and resented.

And then, too, had he not saved her life? But that he would have done for any woman left helpless, as she was, an unconscious victim to a fearful death. She longed, and yet dreaded the sight of him; and by the time he reached the Castle late in the afternoon, had worked herself up into such a state of hysterical nervousness that both Lady Elmshire and Dr. Robson agreed in insisting that she should go to bed; and on her confessing that she had never closed her eyes the preceding night, the latter proceeded to administer a strong anodyne, under the influence of which fire and rescue, woman's emancipation and Dr. Barker's trickery, trades-unions and ungrateful laborers, were all lost together in happy oblivion.

Laurence had fully intended to return to his own quarters at Rose Bank, but of this Lord Elmton would not hear, declaring he meant to keep his friend under his own eye until he was fairly cured; and Lady Elmshire seconded her son. Having fathomed Christian's secret, she longed for the feminine satisfaction of a little bit of match-making. She was by no means sure of Laurence's sentiments, but she fancied that he had a considerable interest in Christian, and was so persuaded that the marriage would be in every way desirable and suitable that she determined to further it by every means in her power.

For some time Laurence had been slowly awakening to the real nature of his feelings for Christian. He had from the first admired her character, although he had been fully alive to the follies by which it was overlaid. He had been conscious of a growing esteem and regard for her, as he saw her striving against difficulties, and endeavoring, to the best of her power, to remedy the evils her unfortunate actions had produced; but until he realized the imminence of her peril, it had never dawned upon him how wildly and desperately he was in love with her. With the first thought of losing her came the revelation; and now, as he was driven slowly to the Castle, he asked himself over and over again the question whether he had any ground for hope.

It was almost a relief to find, on his arrival, that he should not see her that night. He felt that a little more time to arrange his thoughts would be not unwelcome. How he wondered at himself!—not only at his having fallen in love, but at his having been so long unaware of the fact.

The very existence of Lilias Jameson was forgotten. It

seemed to him as if an utterly new life had opened before him, as if he had never loved before. Every thought was centred on Christian, and he felt every hour an eternity until he could learn his fate; although at the same time he dreaded it, and was almost thankful for the night's reprieve.

For two people filled with such thoughts of each other, their first meeting was specially uneventful. Christian had slept late, and did not appear till luncheon-time; and her nervousness and dread of betraying the secret of which she had only just herself become conscious, rendered her painfully embarrassed and constrained. Had it been any ordinary acquaintance, any one for whom she cared little or nothing, to whom she owed her rescue, she would have been at no loss for words. As it was, she could hardly articulate the few incoherent thanks and regrets which sounded so cold and tame to her ears.

Laurence, however, was in no condition to be critical; he was to the full as nervous as Christian, and was only too thankful when her few words were spoken. Lady Elmshire observed his emotion, and hailed it as a favorable omen for the success of her schemes. Christian once married, especially to any one so suitable and so sensible as Laurence, would soon lose all the strange views, which were chiefly the result of her singularly solitary life, and would become an exemplary and useful member of society. Their union was a consummation devoutly to be wished, and one for which she felt no hesitation in planning.

"Elmton," she said, before luncheon was over, "I want you to drive me over to Lakefield this afternoon. My lord is going to ride into Elmton, and will not want the phaeton. As for you two invalids,"—turning to Laurence and Christian—"you must entertain each other. I should like to see you comfortably settled under the great oak before I start."

Perhaps no two people ever appeared less inclined to enjoy themselves, according to order, both looking as red and as embarrassed as was possible; but Lady Elmshire was willfully unconscious, and, before she started on her drive, had seen Laurence comfortably established on a sofa, and Christian in a luxurious rocking-chair, armed with a supply of newspapers, magazines, and other light literature, sufficient, on a moderate computation, for at least a fortnight.

The first half-hour both the young people were unspeakably stiff and constrained. Laurence took up one paper after another, and read random pieces of intelligence, and Christian commented upon them with an almost feverish eagerness, without very well knowing what their meaning was; her great dread was of a pause—she felt that when it came she must say something to him about her rescue, her few words at luncheon-time had been so ludicrously inadequate, and she dreaded the moment more than words could tell. It was not that she was ungrateful, very far indeed from it; but she mistrusted herself, and feared that her newly-discovered secret would escape her. But at length, despite her desperate efforts, the fatal moment arrived,—the pause came, and she felt that now she must speak. Her heart beat till it seemed as if it would burst, she grew hot and cold, and her words appeared to stick in her throat; but at length she contrived to stammer forth,—

"Mr. Courtray, I shall never be able to say half that I want to say; but—that is—I am sure you know—I couldn't say it at luncheon-time—I—I shall never forget last night—and—I—I'm so terribly sorry you were hurt!"

And here poor Christian's composure gave way, and a great sob concluded her speech.

"I could hardly have done less," said Laurence; he was wondering if he might dare to speak, if there was any hope for him, or, if there were, whether precipitancy would injure his cause.

"I know you say so," said Christian, struggling for composure; "but that does not make me think less of what you did, or feel less sorry that you should have suffered in doing it. Oh! when I think that all this wretched business is my fault, that if I had not fancied that I knew so much better than everybody else, Elmshire would have still been a peaceable county, Ettrick would never have been burned, and you would not have been hurt, I hardly know how to hate myself enough."

Here was indeed a change from the self-confident Christian of some few months before. Laurence hailed it with satisfaction, as he said,—

"Indeed, Miss Ettrick, your sorrow makes you exaggerate. The discontent in Elmshire must have sprung up sooner or later."

"Yes, but I gave it the opening," said Christian; "and it was not for want of warning. Even if Lord Elmshire and the agent had not warned me, I ought to have listened to you; for you never laughed at me, so I had not that excuse to prevent my paying attention to you."

How sweet her praise sounded in his ears! He was about to speak, when she continued,—

"It seems as if a veil had been taken from my eyes, and I saw for the first time how foolish, vain, and presumptuous I had been. That fancy for the emancipation of woman I now see was as foolish as you always told me it was; but there again, though you did not laugh at me, though you had the patience to argue with me, I believed you prejudiced, and would not listen. How you must despise me."

"Despise you! No, indeed," said Laurence. "If I argued against your cherished fancies, it was because I grieved to see so much enthusiasm wasted in a bad cause. As to the mistake about your laborers, which has had such sad effects, it was your generosity that was in fault. How indignant you were at my venturing to predict that they would not work when you paid them equally for not doing so!"

But this was a very tender point with Christian; it had been the sorest of all her disappointments to find her confidence in her people's honor misplaced, and as she tried to answer she broke down, and the tears streamed fast down her cheeks.

The sight of her grief was too much for Laurence, and in a moment he was kneeling at her side, begging her forgiveness, and pouring forth his love and his hopes. It was more happiness than Christian could realize. Ever since she had become aware of her own feelings, she had been endeavoring resolutely to stifle them. It seemed a bliss never to be hoped for that Laurence, whom she had unconsciously been elevating on a mental pedestal, should ever care for her. She had been sketching out a prospect of years loveless, save for her sister's affection. And here was the love she coveted poured forth at her feet, urged upon her with all the eloquence of a lover's pleading.

It seemed a dream from which she must awaken. She sat silent, in a turmoil of joy, until Laurence, growing impatient for a reply, begged for only one word. Then, turning her face towards him, she said in a whisper,—

"I love you—I have loved you a long time, but I never knew it."

Happy as he was, Laurence could hardly forbear a smile at an answer so thoroughly characteristic of Christian, so true, naïve, and free from young-ladylike affectation of reticence. But the sudden exertion had been more than was prudent, and when once more restored to the sofa, he alarmed Christian terribly by fainting away. She was amply repaid, however, by the smile that he gave her when, on opening his eyes, he found her bending over him, bathing his forehead with eau-de-Cologne.

"It is a pleasure to be ill with such a nurse," he said faintly; and Christian felt a thrill of joy such as she had never dreamed of. "Christian," he continued, "let me hear you call me Laurence."

And the name came at his bidding, but very low, and with a burning blush.

"Dear one, take this ring from my finger. I cannot do it, as I should like to do. I would rather that signet-ring were our engagement-ring than any other."

"And so would I," said Christian, as she drew the ring off and held her finger for him to put it on; "for I have never seen you without it; and it will seem so much more a part of you than one that you bought for me."

Then came a space of that silence more eloquent sometimes than any words, when, sitting hand in hand, their eyes spoke rather than their lips. Both would have asserted that they had been alone together but a few minutes, but more than three hours had passed when the phaeton drew up to the door, and Lady Elmshire sauntered across the grass towards them. She saw at a glance what had occurred, but took no notice, treating Christian's silence and burning blushes, and Laurence's stammering and irrelevant speeches, as if they were quite matters of course. But before she dressed for dinner there came a tap at her door, and Christian appeared, to announce what had occurred.

"You don't seem surprised," she said, when, with much hesitation and many blushes, she had made her confession. "I thought you would be so much astonished."

Lady Elmshire laughed as she kissed her.

"Hardly, my dear. I saw the catastrophe was certain, and

was almost sure it was imminent—indeed, I plead guilty to leaving you so completely alone this afternoon that you might have the opportunity of coming to an understanding sooner. And now let me congratulate you—indeed, Christian, I can do so most sincerely. I know no man to whom I could more cheerfully confide a daughter of my own, if I possessed one."

"It seems so strange that he can care for me," said Christian, musingly; "he knows all my follies and absurdities, and how headstrong and opiniative I have been, and yet he does not seem to mind."

"He is in love," said Lady Elmshire, smiling.

"Love is a very wonderful thing," said Christian. "There again I was so wrong—I thought I could never feel it, and I am afraid felt almost a contempt for those who did, and now——"

"You have succumbed to the power of Cupid, like the rest of the world."

"Yes, dear Bluebell was right—she always said I should fall in love some day, and that then I should see everything so differently, and so I do. Oh! dear, how foolish I have been, and what nonsense I have talked! I can't bear to think of it."

Lady Elmshire comforted her by pointing out that, as Laurence had evidently not minded the nonsense, there was no great harm done; but she could not help smiling to herself at the change wrought in the decided, self-sufficing Christian by the first touch of Cupid's arrow.

Lord Elmton meanwhile was receiving a similar confidence from Laurence, for which, not being gifted with his mother's natural feminine power of penetration in such matters, he was by no means prepared. Of course he congratulated his friend, but, though he liked her very well, Christian by no means fulfilled his ideal, and he could hardly understand her fascination for Laurence; his felicitations, therefore, although very hearty, were by no means so sincere or cordial as were his mother's.

"I was so surprised," he said to her, when they were alone, "to think of Courtray falling a prey to one of the 'Shrieking Sisterhood,' whom he has always so derided."

"It is hardly fair to call her that, Elmton; she was young and foolish, and left entirely to herself; few girls are very wise under such circumstances."

"Well, he knows his own affairs best, of course. I confess I should not care for a wife who had made herself conspicuous on the platform at that remarkable lecture."

"My dear boy, you can't imagine how ashamed she is of all her connection with those dreadful people; she is quite sure never to have the least inclination for such eccentricities again, and she is most genuinely in love."

"So is he, for that matter; he has forgotten all about his early attachment, which he was so persuaded had exhausted all his powers of loving."

"So it had—until the next time. Well, I think it is a thoroughly satisfactory marriage; they will suit each other admirably."

"Her fortune would suit any one, but I doubt whether Courtray has ever given it a thought. He's odd, you know; perhaps, when it occurs to him, he'll object."

"Never fear," said Lady Elmshire; "he is far too sensible. It always does seem to me that it is very absurd the way men without money profess to object to marrying any woman who happens to have it. I do not think Mr. Courtray is likely to pay Christian so bad a compliment as to lead her to suppose, even by inference, that it is possible that he fell in love with her money rather than herself; and I am sure it must be put very plainly before her for her ever to think of such a thing. She has never been in the way of hearing worldly doctrines, and is really as little acquainted with the world's ways as a child of ten."

The next few days passed tranquilly and happily away. Christian was happy, as she had never believed it possible that she could be—reading to Laurence, watching every movement that she might be ready to obviate any necessity of moving the incapacitated arm; above all, talking to him openly, freely, and unconstrainedly, as she had never in her life talked to any one before. If she had not been so genuinely in love, she must have felt some humiliation at finding how, when she began to discuss her thoughts and feelings with one who had lived in the world, all the theories she had in her ignorance and inexperience formed from her miscellaneous and unrestricted reading not only vanished into thin air, but became conspicuously absurd and ridiculous.

"How can you care for me, Laurence?" she exclaimed, al-

most in tears. "I have been so silly, so conceited. Why do you not despise me?"

"Just because you were not conceited, my darling; you were desperately mistaken, but you were struggling for light and truth in the best way you could, and the arguments generally used are hardly convincing to any one so thoroughly in earnest as you were."

He did not tell her what struck him so forcibly, the utter absence of all thought of self, the generous consideration for others that had been at the root of all her mistakes, and the frank confession which she did not hesitate to make when once convinced that she had been in the wrong. There were no excuses, no subterfuges—indeed, she was inclined to blame herself far more severely than any one else would have done.

Christian smiled to herself sometimes to think how, little more than a year ago, she had marveled at Hyacinth's infatuation, as it had then appeared to her, for Lindsay. Not that she could for a moment allow that a comparison could be made between Lindsay and Laurence. Such an idea could not, of course, be entertained, but she could now comprehend how a woman's whole heart could be bound up in one man, and dimly realize that perhaps Lindsay might have seemed as perfect to Hyacinth as Laurence did to her.

How very strange it was that Hyacinth had never answered her letter!—a letter so full of startling intelligence. It had been begun to tell of the destruction of Ettrick; it had ended with the announcement of the engagement of Ettrick's mistress. Surely either communication was worthy of an answer, and she felt sorely puzzled when day after day passed, and brought her none.

The tidings of Wilfred Lambert's death had reached the Castle, but Lady Elmshire kept the papers out of Christian's way, merely telling her the bare fact of his death; she would not pain her by letting her see the connection between his name and Hyacinth's, which so distressed both her and Lord Elmshire.

At length, after more than a week, when Christian was becoming quite miserable with anxiety as to what could possibly be the matter, Hyacinth's long-looked-for letter arrived; but it was so short and cold, so unlike her general epistles, that Christian was hardly much comforted by it. The letter

seemed to have been written with a mighty effort; the fire was hardly referred to, and Christian's engagement was dismissed in a very few sentences, and with none of the cordiality and rejoicing her sister anticipated. If there had not been a short postscript, complaining of cold and lassitude, Christian would have felt terribly hurt; as it was, she at once rushed to the conclusion that Hyacinth was alarmingly ill, and was immediately in a fever to set off to Rockcliffe and nurse her.

Formerly she would have asserted her opinion, and have started instantly, despite all advice; but she had learned so thoroughly to mistrust her own judgment that she curbed her impatience sufficiently to follow Lady Elmshire's counsel, and write before starting. Lady Elmshire pointed out that Hyacinth only complained of a cold, that she was able to write herself, and therefore could not be so very alarmingly ill; and that it was quite possible that Mrs. St. Orbe's house was hardly capable of holding another guest.

So Christian satisfied herself by a long, loving letter, offering to come at once, if she could be of the smallest use, and imploring her sister to telegraph at any moment if she required her.

She could hardly reconcile it to herself to be so happy as she was when with Laurence; it seemed so cold, hard, and unnatural to be drawing rosy pictures of their future life, and enjoying the present hour as it only falls to the lot of those truly in love to do, while all the while her darling sister was ill and suffering. If it had once entered Christian's head to conceive that Lindsay was not with his wife, not Lady Elmshire's advice, nor even Laurence's entreaties, would have kept her another hour from Rockcliffe; but she naturally imagined that, at the first tidings of her indisposition, he would have at once flown to her side, and entertained a tolerably certain belief that he would consider her presence inconvenient and *de trop*.

Hyacinth's reply arrived in due course, and considerably tranquilized her sister's mind, as being much more like herself. She declared herself much better, begged Christian not to think of coming to her; she was really convalescent, quite past all possibility of requiring to be nursed; entered fully into the sorrow of the burning of Ettrick, and ended with warm congratulations and fervent wishes for her happiness.

It was certainly better,—a very great relief,—but still Christian, in her inmost heart, felt that there was something wanting, that this was not her own Hyacinth. She had expected playful badinage: Hyacinth had always amused herself so greatly by predicting the change that would be wrought in her sister whenever she fell a victim to the irresistible power of love, which predictions had always roused Christian to wrath and contradiction; but now she missed the teasing she had anticipated. Heartfelt hopes for her happiness there were in plenty, but there was a gravity for which she was not prepared, and that filled her with uneasiness; she felt convinced that Hyacinth was either very ill or very unhappy.

In this uneasy state Laurence endeared himself more than ever to her by his unfailing sympathy. He did not endeavor to persuade her that the letter was all that could possibly be desired; he listened to all that she had expected it to contain, agreed that its tone was infinitely graver than could have been expected from Hyacinth, but suggested that a heavy cold, from which she had stated herself to have been suffering, was a most depressing malady, capable of extracting liveliness and spirits from any one; and that doubtless Mr. Lambert's sudden death must have been a great shock to her, as she knew him so well. While she was with him Christian felt amply satisfied, but when alone the conviction of something wrong would inevitably recur.

CHAPTER XXXII.

> "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
> Thou shalt not escape calumny."
>
> *Hamlet.*

As we have said, Hyacinth was infinitely relieved to find that her letter had never reached Lindsay, and that therefore his silence did not, as she had feared, imply anger and disapproval; and it was under the influence of this more cheerful frame of mind that she wrote the second letter to Christian, mentioned in the preceding chapter; but after the first sensation of relief her spirits again failed her.

Lindsay had never written to her since she had first left London, now nearly a month ago. He had apparently left England, and gone she knew not whither, without ever vouchsafing her a syllable of information on the subject. She tried hard to excuse him, telling herself how much he disliked writing, how invariably he procrastinated about and generally shirked writing the shortest and simplest note; how apt he always was, when amused, to forget the flight of time; still, excuse him to herself as she would, there remained a deep and daily-increasing sense of injury and wrong. He had never cared to communicate with her once since she had left him; he had been, as she well knew, in the company of her detested rival during the whole of the Goodwood week; she felt a tolerable certainty that it was with the Marsfields that he had gone abroad. Was it wonderful that, loving her husband fervently as she did, she should be both deeply hurt and feverishly jealous?

It would have fared but ill with Laura Marsfield if her fate had depended on Lady Ettrick's will—ostracism from society, and banishment from any spot where she might even accidentally encounter Sir Lindsay, would have been the mildest doom inflicted upon her.

Captain St. Orbe was growing furiously indignant at Lindsay's neglect of his wife, and had sore difficulty in dissembling his feelings in his sister-in-law's presence. He indemnified himself in speaking out to his wife in a way which that lady by no means approved, for she chose to consider Hyacinth "gravely compromised," "in a most unfortunate position," and averred that she considered her brother "quite justified in making her feel his displeasure." She only "wished there were any signs of her accepting his reprobation in a becoming spirit." Which observations drove Henry St. Orbe nearly frantic, and caused him to say more harsh things to his wife, respecting her lack of charity and proneness to suspicion, than he had ever done in the whole course of their married life.

He might as well have raged against a statue. Ursula St. Orbe folded her hands, cast up her eyes, sighed deeply, and, in fact, went through all the poses of an ill-used and misunderstood saint—indeed, as such she really considered herself, encouraged thereto by the injudicious utterances of Mr. Bates

and his senior curate, to whom Captain St. Orbe's straightforward common sense was eminently distasteful.

But chafe as he might, Captain St. Orbe recognized that there was nothing whatever that he could do. He had established the fact that his brother-in-law was out of England, and there his power ended. All he could do was to devote himself to furthering Hyacinth's comfort and pleasure, and to this he applied himself assiduously. Never in her way, he was always at her beck and call, ready to do anything he thought she might like—to read to her, to talk, or simply to sit quietly in the room, obviating the feeling of loneliness, but without disturbing her thoughts. He could understand and sympathize with the shuddering horror of the very sight of the sea which Hyacinth experienced, and which, to Mrs. St. Orbe, appeared sentimental, if not actually culpable folly.

"It shows very clearly that she cared for that wretched man, that she cannot bear to look at the sea because it is connected with his death," she argued; "and really, Henry, I am surprised at the way you encourage so improper, I may say indecent, an exhibition of feeling."

At first Captain St. Orbe answered angrily and hotly, but he soon found his words were of no avail, and devoted himself to shielding Hyacinth from attack, rather than to combating his wife's uncharitable opinions. But after a few days the doctor interfered.

"Lady Ettrick will not get well here, Captain St. Orbe," he said, decidedly. "The shock to the system has most seriously affected her nerves; and her horror of the sight of the sea, from which it is impossible she can escape here, retards her recovery. The sooner she leaves Rockcliffe the better; and I believe, if she had only the energy to say so, she herself longs to get away."

Sorely puzzled was Henry St. Orbe at this communication, although he at once recognized its wisdom. It was easy to say that Hyacinth should leave Rockcliffe, but where was she to go? Christian could no longer receive her at Ettrick; besides, he had gathered from her conversation that Sir Lindsay had refused to allow her to go there, and felt tolerably certain that no persuasion would induce her to act contrary to his expressed wishes.

"Strange," he mused, as he paced up and down the sands

in sore perplexity; "her husband grossly neglects her, and she positively worships the ground he treads on, and would die, I am perfectly convinced, before she would go to her own sister, contrary to his wishes; while Ursula, whom I have never in my ife crossed or thwarted, will not even curb her tongue, and desist from abuse of her sister-in-law, to please me. Ah well! women are strange creatures, and love is a curious passion,"—with which sage and novel conclusion he turned his thoughts once more to the problem before him.

Suddenly an inspiration struck him: he would go over to Tynedale, and ask Lady Tynedale to invite Hyacinth. Luckily it was early; he should have time to reach Tynedale, which was not much more than thirty miles off, and return in the day; and he had no sooner determined upon the excursion than he started at the top of his speed for the railway-station. While in the train he had time to reflect on how, more than probably, his journey would be in vain: Lady Tynedale would be abroad, or visiting, or something else would prevent so desirable a consummation as her affording Hyacinth a shelter to which not the most captious dragon of propriety could take exception.

Fortune, however, favored him. Lady Tynedale was at home, and received him with much cordiality, though with evident surprise at his unexpected appearance. He was far too much in earnest as to the object of his visit to delay its declaration for a moment; as soon as the first greetings were over, he began at once,—

"Lady Tynedale, you know that my sister-in-law, Lady Ettrick, is staying with us?"

"Yes, indeed," and Lady Tynedale's countenance expressed considerable concern; "the newspapers, I regret to say, have told me so much, and——"

"You must not blame her!" cried Henry St. Orbe, quickly. "I will stake all I hold dearest in the world that she is absolutely blameless. Lindsay has neglected her, and she may have been thoughtless, but not guilty."

Lady Tynedale held out her hand.

"Thank you," she said; "it is rare indeed to find any one so nobly ready to defend a woman who has, however blamelessly, incurred the world's censure. I believe with you that the appearances against Hyacinth were caused rather by her

utter guilelessness than anything else, though I know her to have been lamentably imprudent. I cannot refrain from blaming Sir Lindsay; he should have kept her with him, and then this last misfortune could not have occurred. Now, having assured you of my perfect sympathy, tell me all that has happened since she has been with you—the true story of Mr. Lambert's shocking death, and anything that I can do to help either her or you."

Thus encouraged, Henry St. Orbe gave a faithful narrative of all he knew. Hyacinth had never alluded to her interview with Wilfred Lambert upon the island, but both he and Lady Tynedale knew enough tolerably to guess what must have been its purport. When he had concluded, his listener observed,—

"And now you want me to have her here, so as to get her away from Rockcliffe, and all the painful associations inseparable from it. You are right; it is the only thing to be done, but she must not know that you have been here and suggested it. I will write by to-night's post, as if I had just heard of her being in the neighborhood. She has not seen the papers, of course?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Then there will be nothing to make her wonder that I had not written before. I should have done so, but hardly knew what to say. How does Sir Lindsay bear all the hints and innuendoes that have been so freely and gratuitously made? He should have come to her at once, if it were for nothing but to stop scandal."

"He is abroad," said Henry St. Orbe, detailing his unavailing London journey; "she has never heard from him since they parted."

"Poor, poor child!—with her affectionate disposition, it must be a sore trial," said Lady Tynedale, pityingly. "How unjust it seems that she should be so severely punished for mere thoughtlessness and want of worldly wisdom, whilst others, who outrage all virtue and propriety, escape even the breath of scandal! Well, I shall be glad to have her here as long as Sir Lindsay is absent, and as she likes to stay; and indeed, as your house, which is the right place for her, is rendered impossible by the shock to her nerves, this is the best asylum she could have. Neither Sir Lindsay nor the

world can find anything to find fault with in her being with us."

"No; that is exactly what I felt," said Henry St. Orbe. "It was that which made me decide upon coming to you. And now I must be off, if I am to catch my train. Thank you a thousand times; you have taken a great weight off my mind."

It was somewhat difficult not to look conscious when Hyacinth informed him the next morning of Lady Tynedale's invitation.

"Of course I cannot accept it," she said, languidly. "I am in no condition for visiting."

"Lady Tynedale says they shall be alone," said Henry, looking over the letter. "You see she apologizes for asking you at so dull a time."

"Yes; but—I couldn't go. Besides, Lindsay sent me here, and I must stay."

"I hardly think you either need, or, indeed, ought. Dr. Moore told me yesterday it was imperatively necessary that you should have a change; that you would never recover either strength or tone here, and your health is, of course, Lindsay's first object."

"You do not think he would object?" said Hyacinth, hesitatingly; the thought of getting out of sight of the sea, ever hereafter to be connected with that agonizing interview, was very tempting to her.

"Object! Of course not; he would be the first to advocate it. Here,"—bringing her the writing materials,—"write the letter, and say you will go to-morrow. I am just going out with Benedict, and will take it to the post, then it will reach Tynedale by the second delivery." And by thus clinching the matter, he prevailed and carried off her acceptance, to his infinite satisfaction.

Mrs. St. Orbe's surprise knew no bounds, and she drove her husband nearly frantic by expressing to him her surprise that Lady Tynedale should choose to receive beneath her roof any one so "gravely compromised" as was Hyacinth. How unspeakable would have been his indignation had he seen the letter which Lady Tynedale received the next morning. Mrs. St. Orbe conceived it to be "her duty" to write as follows:—

"My dear Cousin,—

"*Being myself a mother*, I cannot reconcile it to my *conscience* to allow any one under *such a cloud* as is my unhappy sister-in-law to avail herself of your hospitality without making you aware of all the details of the *sad* case. *Your* daughter is of an age when it behooves you to watch *jealously* over the *purity* of those with whom she associates, mine are of too tender years for such extreme care to be requisite; besides, I could not refuse my only brother, when he *implored* me to grant an *asylum* to his wife. He generously said as little as he could (indeed, my dearest mother wrote for him), but I fear there was *no doubt* that Lady Ettrick's conduct showed *sad levity*, and was *most compromising*. I endeavored, on her first arrival, to arouse her to a sense of her fault, and to induce her to confide in our *inestimable* clergyman, Mr. Bates, and to avail herself of the *unspeakable* privilege and *consolation* of confession; but she indignantly declined, and even attempted to persuade me that she was *perfectly innocent*, though at the same time she confessed to having been in a *most compromising* situation with Mr. Lambert.

"But the worst has yet to be told. Instead of accompanying me to the services of the church, or in my humble ministrations to the sick, needy, and afflicted, she *professed* a desire to wander about alone, and especially to frequent a certain island seldom visited by any of the inhabitants of Rockcliffe. I say *professed*, for there is ample reason to fear that these solitary wanderings were but a means of meeting *her lover*, the wretched man whose fearful death you must have seen in the papers, together with the surmises to which it *too naturally* gave rise.

"They must, on the last occasion, have been *four hours*, at the least, *alone* together on the island; yet Lady Ettrick appears impervious to any feeling of shame, and expresses not the *slightest penitence*. Possibly, from the fact of my brother being abroad, she trusts that the whole story may never reach his ears.

"I have written thus openly on this *painful* subject, my dear Helen, conceiving it to be my duty to let you know all the circumstances before you admitted my *unhappy* sister-in-law to intimate companionship with your *pure-minded* child. If, on becoming acquainted with them, you should *decline to*

receive her, she will, as you may feel assured, be *tenderly cared for* here.

"Your affectionate cousin,
"URSULA ST. ORBE."

Indignation and disgust struggled hard for the mastery in Lady Tynedale's mind as she read the foregoing epistle.

"My poor Hyacinth, it is time indeed you came away," she murmured. "It is well Henry St. Orbe is more generous and pure-minded than his wife. If he could see that letter! I almost wish he could; and yet—no; it would give a noble heart exquisite pain. I will answer it at once." And sitting down, she wrote:

"MY DEAR URSULA,—

"I have received your letter, and fully appreciate your motives. Ethel and I shall meet my dear Hyacinth at the station this afternoon.

"Yours sincerely,
"HELEN TYNEDALE."

Lady Tynedale was quite shocked at the change that illness and anxiety had made in Hyacinth's appearance; it seemed incredible that but five weeks had passed since she last saw her bright and fresh in her drawing-room in Park Street. Yet Hyacinth was both looking and feeling better than she had done since the melancholy catastrophe of Wilfred Lambert's death. The relief of getting away from the scene of the disaster was unspeakable; and though Henry St. Orbe had been kindness itself, Ursula's manner and air of reprehension had been inexpressibly galling to her sister-in-law's proud spirit—more especially as the latter was perfectly unconscious of any graver fault than careless thoughtlessness.

There was no doubt of her welcome at Tynedale. It made her feel brighter and less careworn than she had done since she had left London; and by the end of dinner she was talking, almost like her own bright self, of the fire at Ettrick, and of Christian's prospects. The latter piece of intelligence was news to Lady Tynedale, and excited her considerably. She knew little or nothing of Laurence Courtray personally, but was convinced of his sterling worth from her husband's opin-

ion of him, for it was far from easy to render Lord Tynedale enthusiastic.

Christian had not specially fascinated her—her strange theories, and the self-possession with which she enunciated them, had jarred her sensibilities, and seemed to her unfeminine; still, she was willing to hope for the best. Lord Tynedale was unfeignedly delighted.

"I am not surprised," he said. "I noticed, that first night they met, that she attracted him very much by her straightforward way of saying just what she meant. I was always afraid it would take a rude lesson to shake her theories; but I hardly anticipated anything so bad as this. Ettrick burned! Dear, dear, what a pity! Well, let us look to the bright side of things—it might have been worse—Laurence might not have been there to save her. Helen, let us have the lovers here. We should all like to see Christian in her new character."

So Lady Tynedale wrote at once, and in a couple of days the lovers arrived, though the doctor at Elmton had made considerable demur to Laurence's traveling, in the interest of his arm. But he had seen Christian's eyes sparkle at the thought of again seeing Hyacinth, and no thought of what might be best for himself could weigh for a moment against her pleasure.

Quite unaware of Hyacinth's troubles, Christian exclaimed in amazement at the change the nine months of their separation had wrought. She could not believe that the grave, calm, quiet Lady Ettrick could be her own merry, madcap Bluebell, whose spirits were only too wild and untiring. It seemed as if years rather than months must have elapsed to render such a change possible.

Christian looked at her in dismay, the conviction dawning slowly but surely on her heart that her darling sister was unhappy; and with the conviction came a hatred for Lindsay, which she could not have believed herself capable of feeling for any human being. She was ready with any amount of condolence, but she soon found that, so far as her own affairs were concerned, Hyacinth was absolutely dumb. Of her delight in finding herself once more with her sister, there could be no doubt. Seated together, their arms round each other's waists, the head of the younger sister pillowed on the shoulder

of the elder, Hyacinth asked question after question, drawing forth in detail all the vexations and pleasures, mortifications and delights, of the past nine months; but she vouchsafed no confidence in return, and Christian, though disappointed, acquiesced silently in her determination.

It was the dread of seeming to blame Lindsay that sealed Hyacinth's lips. She strove hard not to admit even to herself that his conduct towards had been unkind, that he had treated a very venial fault with unnecessary harshness—more especially as the cause of offense given by her thoughtlessness could never have arisen, had he not for his own gratification left her to her own guidance in the midst of scenes and circumstances absolutely new to her, while he amused himself elsewhere.

She strove to put away these thoughts from her mind, to think only of her love for him, and of all the happiness they should enjoy together alone at Glen Ettrick, where, as she still believed, they were to meet in about ten days' time; but, strive as she would, the thought of how indifferent he must be to her, never to have written to her since their separation, would constantly recur. She was blissfully unconscious that her name had been generally mentioned in connection with Wilfred Lambert's. She knew that, when annoyed, Lindsay was very apt to exaggerate what he had heard; and, conscious of her own innocence, imagined that such must have been the case on the occasion of his hearing accidentally of her drive from Richmond. To all he had said about Mr. Lambert's having been too much with her during the season, she attached absolutely no importance. Had he not known perfectly well the terms of intimacy on which they were?—indeed, had he not always been the one to invite him to the house?

All the innuendoes in the papers at the time of the catastrophe had been kept from her by Henry St. Orbe's watchful care, and though she had been startled into indignation when Ursula had urged "confession" and penitence upon her, she had attributed such impertinence to some ill-natured remark of Mrs. Ettrick's (between whom and her daughter-in-law there was no love lost), and to the strong aptitude for spiteful insinuation which it was impossible to live with Mrs. St. Orbe without soon knowing her to be possessed of.

Christian was even less aware than her sister of the things that had been said, and Lady Tynedale determined that no word should be spoken that could enlighten Hyacinth, until, at least, some tidings of her husband had rendered her happier and less anxious. This determination Laurence much deplored.

"Indeed, Lady Tynedale," he said, when the question was being discussed, "I know your intentions are the kindest in the world, but I think you are wrong. It would be better for Lady Ettrick to hear from you what has been said, than for her to hear it, as she is tolerably sure to do, from some one who will not break it so carefully or guard her feelings so tenderly."

"I really cannot wound her, poor child," said Lady Tynedale. "She is so evidently guileless, and unaware of the vile interpretations put upon her too great innocence, more especially when she is so unhappy at not hearing from Sir Lindsay, about whose conduct I really cannot trust myself to speak."

"But you cannot always shelter her from hearing what is said," urged Laurence. "How much better it would come from you than from a stranger! Or let me tell Christian—she will know better than any one else can how to avoid wounding her."

But Lady Tynedale was not to be convinced; she hoped that the nine days' wonder might subside, and that Hyacinth might be spared the pain of ever knowing how harshly and unjustly she had been judged; and Laurence, though very unwillingly, felt bound to abide by her decision.

When a few more days had passed, Hyacinth's amazement at not hearing from Lindsay increased. It only wanted two days to the 20th of August, the day on which they were to have arrived at Glen Ettrick, and yet he made no sign. But at length, on the 19th, came a letter, forwarded from Rockcliffe, and, trembling with delight, she tore it open; but after a few moments she turned deadly pale, put her hand to her forehead, and fell back insensible, with the letter clutched convulsively in her hand. All was confusion. Lady Tynedale and Christian flew to her side, while Laurence and Lord Tynedale opened additional windows, and supplied water. It was not very long before she opened her eyes.

"Let me go to him—let me tell him it is not true!" she

gasped. "Oh! Lindsay, Lindsay, where are you?—why have you not got my letter?" and then, throwing her arms round Christian's neck, she burst into a passion of tears.

When she grew a little calmer, they got her to her own room, and having seen her restored to comparative composure, Lady Tynedale left her alone with Christian, and went downstairs to take counsel with her husband and Laurence.

"What can he have said?" she exclaimed, as she entered the breakfast-room. "She has not told us a syllable, and keeps the letter clinched tight, and I dared not ask her, for fear of agitating her too much."

"This fell from it," said Laurence, giving her a piece of newspaper. "I fear it points plainly to the nature of Sir Lindsay's communication."

The inclosure was a scrap from *Galignani*, giving a sensational account of Wilfred Lambert's death on an island where he was in the habit of meeting privately Lady E——k, and drawing a vivid picture of the "unhappy lady's" horror at "seeing her lover killed before her very eyes." The paragraph concluded, "It is rumored that Sir L—— E—— has already taken steps towards procuring a divorce."

As Lady Tynedale read these last lines, the paper fell from her hands, and she looked at her husband in blank and utter dismay. There was a long pause before she could gasp out,—

"How could he send it? It is too cruel, too barbarous! Oh! Mr. Courtray, how right you were!—how I wish I had taken your advice, and broken to her gently what the papers had said. But how could I imagine that Sir Lindsay would send her such a thing?"

"We fear he believes the whole story, Helen," said Lord Tynedale, gravely.

"Believe it!"—such an idea had never entered Lady Tynedale's brain; even now that it was suggested to her, she could not grasp its possibility. She could not realize that Sir Lindsay, who must know his wife's purity and goodness so much better than even she did, could for a moment give credence to the monstrous tale of daily meetings on a lonely island. But before she could sufficiently express her indignation at the bare supposition, a message came from Christian, begging her presence in Hyacinth's room; and, anxious to

know what really had been said, she obeyed the summons at once.

Hyacinth was walking restlessly up and down the room, looking very different from what she had done when Lady Tynedale had left her, for her cheeks were flushed crimson, and her eyes were rather blazing than sparkling.

"Helen," she began at once, "tell me the truth, for Christian either cannot or will not. What have the papers said about me that can justify this letter, which assumes that I have done some vile and wicked thing? If they have said anything, why was I not told? and if they have not, what does Lindsay mean? Is he mad? I almost think he must be. He says he has sent me an extract from a paper, that I may see what is said; but it is not here. What does it all mean?"

Lady Tynedale saw that the fullest and plainest explanation was now the best; so, premising that Christian, having seen none of the papers, really had nothing to tell, she repeated all that had been said, and ended by placing the fragment of *Galignani* in her hand.

She had anticipated a wild burst of grief, sobs, tears, hysterical paroxysms, but no such demonstrations camé. Hyacinth listened in silence, read the paragraph twice over, and then murmured to herself,—

"And he really believes that!—believes that I ever cared for, ever gave a thought to, another! He could never, never have loved me, or he could not so misunderstand me! Well, we are fairly matched; he has killed my love now!"

Then, turning to Lady Tynedale, she put Sir Lindsay's letter into her hand. It was short, cold, and bitter. It said that, after the conduct of which she had been guilty, it was, of course, impossible for them to live together again; that he would spare her the humiliation of divorce, but that their separation must be complete; that for the present he should remain abroad, but would write to his lawyer to make arrangements; and that he inclosed her a paragraph from *Galignani*, to show her that he knew all, and that exculpation was useless; he therefore begged she would not write.

That was all. There was no form of termination, save the signature, Lindsay Ettrick; no date, nor any clue to where the letter was written, save the Paris postmark.

"So I could not write, even if I were not forbidden," said Hyacinth, bitterly. "Christian, dear, don't cry. I have only made a mistake, as so many others have done before me. I adored an idol which I had idealized into gold, and now I am disappointed to find that, after all, it is but clay. But you must know the whole of the facts, Helen." And, turning to Lady Tynedale, she narrated briefly every circumstance of her acquaintance with Mr. Lambert—Christian thus learning, for the first time, of his proposal and rejection on that eventful day when the truant boat imprisoned him and her sister on the island.

After a very few words of comment, Lady Tynedale left the room, to report all the circumstances to her lord, and the sisters were left alone. But Hyacinth resolutely turned from the subject, excepting when she said,—

"Christian, when you go away from here, I will come home with you, and stay a little while; until you marry, perhaps, and I have settled where to live."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at noon or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'"

Mariana.

For a few days all things went on very quietly at Tynedale Park; but though she seemed outwardly composed, it was evident to the fond and anxious eyes that were watching Hyacinth that she was in a state of unspeakable and restless mis-

ery. She talked fast on every conceivable subject, but it was manifest to them that she often hardly knew what she was talking about; she laughed loud and frequently, but the laughter had no merriment in it; she never adverted to Lindsay or to the painful circumstances in which she was placed, but they felt certain that they were never out of her thoughts.

And such was, indeed, the case. At first Hyacinth really believed that her love for Lindsay was absolutely dead, that he had killed it forever by his unjust suspicions; but though she really believed this, it did not still the aching of her heart at the thought that she was never to see him more.

Lady Tynedale had endeavored at first to persuade her that all must come right; that when Sir Lindsay received the letter which she had written to him on the day after Mr. Lambert's death, he would see that his suspicions were unfounded, and would be bitterly ashamed of and sorry for them.

Hyacinth shook her head. She well knew how obstinate her husband was, and felt convinced that far more proof than her word would be required to change his impressions. She could hear him say that "the evidence of an interested party was worth but little." It was one of his pet phrases, that she knew so well, and that had often seemed hard to her, even in the happy days when she had little dreamed that even the faintest shadow of a cloud could ever come between them. And other evidence than her unassisted word she could not give. She had almost always gone out alone, always gone to the island alone; she could adduce no testimony that she had not had a companion day after day. So much she said at once calmly and quietly, with a sort of despair in her voice that wrung Christian's heart.

It was not till two or three days had passed that the thought of what the world would say, of how scandal must be busy with her name, seemed to strike her; and even when it did do so, she appeared strangely apathetic. It seemed as if the light of her life had gone out with the loss of Lindsay, and that no power to care for anything else was left. She would probably have succumbed utterly, had it not been for the indignation she felt against him for not knowing it to be impossible that she should ever have had a single thought disloyal to him. Still the mental agony was telling on her—she grew

paler and thinner, as it seemed to Christian, every hour, and her dark blue eyes had a look of plaintive misery in them that wrung her sister's heart.

Laurence was certainly to be pitied. Christian was so engrossed with Hyacinth's sorrows that he got but little of her undivided attention; but though he would gladly have had her all to himself, he was wise enough to know that so tender and affectionate a sister was pretty certain to make a loving wife. Even when they were alone together, the one engrossing subject would intrude, Christian arguing that, if they could only find Lindsay, all must be well—that Hyacinth's innocence must be proved. It made her quite angry when Laurence shook his head; she did not see as he did the force of Hyacinth's utter inability to prove that her hours on the island had, until that last fatal day, been passed in complete solitude. One day, as they were strolling down the avenue, discussing the inevitable question, she suddenly paused, clasped her hands, and exclaimed,—

"Oh! Laurence, I must have been mad all this time! Why, I can prove that Mr. Lambert, at any rate, was not with her."

"You, Christian? How?"

"He came over to see me on the Wednesday, and he did not then know she was at Rockcliffe, for he was surprised when I mentioned it. He could not have got there till late on Thursday, and it was on the Friday that he followed her to the island. Oh! Laurence, to think that all this should never have occurred to me before! Surely—surely it is evidence enough?"

"It is a great help, certainly," said Laurence, musingly. "I will go over to Rockcliffe, and get in black and white the day and hour of his arrival at the hotel. Even Sir Lindsay cannot deny that evidence."

"But you are not fit to go—your arm should not be shaken," said Christian, anxiously.

The other arm was round her waist in a moment, and he drew her fondly towards him.

"Darling, nothing will hurt the arm while I can hear you talk of its welfare in such a tender tone."

"You did it in saving me," murmured Christian, hiding her blushing face on his shoulder.

"Besides, I am really better. I will go to Rockliffe to-morrow. And now, Christian, that I have for one rare moment got sole and tranquil possession of you, answer me the question I have asked you before: When will you make me even happier than I am now?—When will you be my very own wife?"

He paused for a reply, but none came; and Christian's face was still hidden.

"Speak, dearest—say next month."

"Oh! no, no," came a murmur; and then, raising her face, crimson with blushes, and with tears streaming down the cheeks, she continued, "Oh! Laurence, dear Laurence, it isn't that I don't love you—you know it isn't; but my poor Bluebell she has no one but me; and I can't leave her while she is so miserable—indeed I can't! This horrid misery can't go on—it must end soon, or she will die—she is fading away from us now. Oh! let us make her happy again, and I will do anything you wish."

Laurence bent down and kissed her; he said nothing, but the deep, unspeakable love manifested in her tone and manner affected him deeply. He was fast learning to forget that the soft and gentle Christian, whose heart was so tender, and whose sentiments were so thoroughly in accordance with his own, had ever been the advocate of woman's rights, the supporter of Dr. Barker and Miss Sophonisba Jinks, and the disturber of the peace of quiet Elmshire. It seemed as if all these things must have been done by some other Christian, not by his adored promised wife, who seemed to have no thought but for the sorrows of her twin sister.

Perhaps her former "views" seemed more strange and unreal to Christian herself than they did to any one else. Love had caused such an entire revolution in her character and opinions that it seemed impossible, even to herself, that she should have talked the nonsense, and advocated the absurdities, of which she now could not even think without burning blushes.

Laurence warned her to say nothing about his journey to Rockcliffe; he might, by some accident, be unable to obtain the information he required, and it was no use raising Hyacinth's hopes unnecessarily. Christian agreed, but shook her head mournfully, as she said she did not believe her sister had a shadow of hope left. About five o'clock she strolled down

the avenue to meet her lover on his return, and they were soon established on their favorite seat.

"Has your journey tired you?" was her first question; and having received a satisfactory answer, she continued,—"Well? You have succeeded, I know, by your face!"

"I am glad you know it so well. Yes, I have got the date we want. He arrived at Rockcliffe at half-past seven on Thursday evening, went out very early the next morning, and was never seen again alive."

"Then, in face of that, how could they have invented such wicked stories?"

"How are spiteful stories ever invented? They are never—at least so rarely that one may say never—deliberately composed. Some one *wonders* if such a thing could be so; the next *supposes* it was so; the third *believes* it was; the fourth *knows* it on the best authority, and so on. In this case it seems Mrs. St. Orbe did vast mischief by her unfortunate way of talking."

"Still, the evidence is clear—Lindsay cannot doubt it," said Christian. "Oh! if we only could find him! It seems so despairing to write letters to his club, when he, as probably as not, never has them forwarded."

"Has not Hyacinth written?"

"Oh! no; you know he forbid her to do so. Besides, I told you what she said, that he 'had killed her love!'"

"Do you think that love can be killed, Christian? Remember, 'love is love for evermore!'"

"Yes, I know," said Christian, hesitating. "Still—injustice—being condemned unheard, when she has done no harm; it is very, very hard, poor darling! You cannot wonder she should feel bitter."

"No; and I dare say just now she does believe that her love is dead; but it isn't, as you will see some day. No pure, true woman's love ever died out, when once fairly awakened, how unworthy soever its object may be proved. But now, Christian, I want to consult you on an idea that has just struck me. We have no clue to Sir Lindsay's whereabouts, and, as you say, it is disheartening to write letters without some reasonable prospect of their reaching their destination. What do you say to my going in search of him?"

No answer. Christian gave him one look—then covered

her face with her hands, and burst into tears. Laurence was for a moment puzzled; it was bewilderingly delightful to think that the prospect of losing him for a short time should provoke such emotion in the usually calm and self-contained Christian. Still, he was surprised that the surest mode of extricating her sister from her troubles should be received with such little favor. Pressing her to him, he said,—

"My darling, if you object so much, of course the matter is at an end. I only proposed it as the quickest method of ending the suspense."

"Oh! it is not that," gasped Christian, through her still fast-falling tears; "it is that I was so glad, so thankful. It seemed like an inspiration; and, oh! Laurence, I felt so grateful to you that—that——"

"That what?" with a still closer pressure.

"That I felt as if I had never known before how much I loved you!—how good you were! Laurence, you will not be gone longer than you can help?"

"Is it likely that I should?" looking into her eyes. "Christian, give me my reward! Promise to marry me as soon as I come back!"

Her head sank on his shoulder, and the answer, though unspoken, was evidently satisfactory.

When Laurence's proposal was announced, it was at once hailed as the one means whereby satisfactory tidings of Sir Lindsay could be obtained. Lord Tynedale told him he had taken a weight off his mind; Lady Tynedale was so enthusiastic that she hardly knew what to say or do to make enough of him. It seemed to her the end of all their troubles; of course Sir Lindsay would at once see the wicked injustice of which he had been guilty, would return with Laurence, and he and Hyacinth would live happy for evermore. She talked over his visit to Rockcliffe with him, and was not surprised to hear that much of the mischief was directly traceable to Mrs. St. Orbe's uncharitable conversation: she had talked to Mr. Bates, to his curates, and to the different church-workers with whom she came in contact; they had naturally repeated, with much inaccuracy, what she said, and thus the seed of the scandal was soon ready to blossom and bear fruit on the opportunity which so soon arose.

Lady Tynedale could not refrain from showing Laurence

Ursula's letter, and was fully satisfied by the vehement terms in which he stigmatized it, while at the same time she took good care to absolve Henry St. Orbe from any possible connection with his wife's conduct, relating how he had come to her and suggested her invitation to Lady Ettrick, and how well and kindly he had spoken of her.

But the announcement of Laurence's intended journey had a more marked effect upon Hyacinth herself than upon any one else; hitherto she had seemed stony and cold, rather despairing than resigned, but at the first mention of his journey, and of the unquestionable evidence that he proposed to give, her whole manner changed; she became restless, uneasy, almost irritable; instead of sitting, as she had done, gazing for hours upon vacancy, she was rarely, if ever, still. A feverish brilliance sparkled in her eyes and colored her cheeks; it was evident that hope, which she had thought dead, was once more stirring at her heart.

"I told you her love was not so dead as she fancied," said Laurence, as he strolled on the terrace with Christian. "I believe there is nothing in the world she would like so much as to go with me."

And he was right; in her secret heart Hyacinth envied him his power of setting forth openly, of going boldly to her husband. She would have given willingly everything she possessed to have been in his place. She gave him no message, and he asked for none; he felt it was but right and reasonable that the first overture should come from Sir Lindsay.

If, a year ago, it had been told to Christian that in twelve months she would not only be engaged to be married, but would cry till she was almost ill because the man she loved left her for what they both hoped would be a very short space of time, she would have laughed the idea to scorn. Such was, however, the case; the blank left by Laurence's departure quite appalled her; it seemed as if her life was gone, for Christian's nature was thoroughly honest and genuine, and when she gave her heart, she gave it utterly. In this, though different in most other points, the sisters were alike; both loved with their whole hearts, with never a thought of self.

"Let us go home, Christian," said Hyacinth, two days after Laurence's departure. "I cannot bear to stay here. Helen and Lord Tynedale are everything that is kind, but that

is just the reason I cannot bear to stay. They are keeping the house empty, giving up all their friends for me, and I cannot bear that they should. Let us go."

"But, Bluebell, you forget—Ettrick is burned, and we have nowhere to go. Lady Elmshire would be delighted to have you, but——"

"No, no—of course that would be the same as here, without even being with my own relations. But, Christian, why can't we go to the agent's house? It is quite big enough."

"I never once thought of it."

"No, but now I have suggested it, don't you see that it would not only be feasible, but the best thing to do? Write to Mr. Margesson to-day. I will go and tell Helen."

Lady Tynedale made many objections; she was really glad to be able to give the shelter of her roof and the protection of her name to her unhappy young cousin, and would gladly have continued to give her both until her husband's return; but Hyacinth was firm, though the first tears she had shed since those caused by Lindsay's letter were called forth by Helen Tynedale's kindness. But the notion of a return to Ettrick having once seized her, she positively pined to carry it out; she longed for the absolute quiet, and also to wander once more in the old haunts of her childhood.

So a few days saw them safely established under the agent's roof, Henry St. Orbe having insisted on traveling with them as an escort, to his wife's decided displeasure. Coming back to Ettrick as she was now doing, forced the sense of her loss upon Christian's mind in a manner that had not as yet been the case. She had been so occupied with all that had occurred, with Laurence's accident and her own happy love, with Lindsay's cruelty and Hyacinth's misfortunes, that the magnitude of her own loss had hardly struck her. Now, however, returning from a distance, and seeing for the first time the heap of blackened ruin that was all that remained of the stately home of her whole life, tears streamed down her cheeks as she stood contemplating the wreck. The lives of the inmates, and the plate, were absolutely all that had been saved. Pictures, valuable in themselves, and endeared by the associations of a whole life, all the cherished possessions of childhood, rendered precious by their connection with that lost mother whose memory both sisters almost worshiped; a really priceless

library, collected by Sir Loudoun with immense care—all had perished; and although the agent assured her that the loss was fully covered by insurance, she felt, as so many have done before her, that double the sum could not replace a precious treasure or valued association. She endeavored to go among her people as usual, but they all held aloof. A sense of shame for the cowardly part they had played had begun to penetrate even the density of the rural mind. It was beginning to dawn upon them that to have stood looking on while a helpless woman, to say nothing of innocent servants, were burned to death, was an act horrible in itself, and possible only to untutored savages or trades'-unionists; and shame made them shun Christian's advances in the most determined manner. Not being fully awake to the cause, she felt this marked avoidance deeply. Was it not enough that they should so grievously have injured her that they must shun her too?

It was a bitter drop in her cup, which was otherwise now so passing sweet; but she comforted herself by looking forward to the time when Laurence's hand would hold the reins of government, assuring herself that all would then be well.

What a change from the Christian of a few short months ago, full of views of political importance, and contemning marriage as reducing woman to the condition of a slave! Love, the mighty leveler, had indeed wrought wonders in her case; and though Hyacinth had not the spirits either to laugh at or to tease her sister, she could not sometimes forbear a faint smile at the marvelous alteration in all her sentiments—it was what she had always predicted; yet the change was more absolute and complete than even she had anticipated. She wandered about much alone, spending much time in the Dell, where the russet and gold of autumn were beginning to lay burnishing fingers on the great beech-tree and on the feathering brake; the trails of honeysuckle were hidden now by the plumed masses of the wild clematis, bryony with its bright orange berries linking the lower branches to the taller ferns; purple fox-gloves reared their heads in stately majesty, and the wind sighed through the bulrushes by the side of the lake.

It was September. Nature was in the prime of its age, gently tending towards decay; there was a sort of pause, a hush, a stillness over all that suited her melancholy mood far

better than the brightness, the movement, the full freshness of spring would have done. Hour after hour she sat musing under the beech, going over in her mind every action of her life from the day when she had first seen Lindsay, endeavoring, poor child, to blame herself, not him, for the shipwreck of their happiness, but hardly succeeding, in spite of her efforts. At every turn Mrs. Marsfield rose before her—Mrs. Marsfield, with Lindsay by her side, while she was left alone, and told to amuse herself, and considered troublesome and ungrateful because such permission failed to satisfy a heart craving for love, affection, and her husband's companionship.

Then his harshness to her one fault, which, try as she would—and she did strive hard and long in her endeavor to exculpate him—she could not think so very fearful a one, his determination to send her from him, and now, last of all, his readiness to believe a report, a mere newspaper report, as she said bitterly to herself, against her. Was it—could it be possible that he had altogether ceased to care for her?—that he had seized on a mere pretext to rid himself of her society? She almost persuaded herself that such must be the case, else why had he never answered a single letter, or taken the smallest notice of her since her departure from Park Street?

How feverishly she longed for Laurence's tidings! To know where he was, what he had said, whether he was alone, or whether that woman, the destroyer of her happiness, the bane of her peace, was still in his company. But it seemed as if definite tidings were never to reach her. Laurence wrote daily, there was that comfort, but he seemed to be no nearer a trace of Lindsay than when he departed. He had gone straight to Bognor, where it was known that Sir Lindsay had stayed for Goodwood with Mr. and Mrs. Marsfield, and had with infinite difficulty discovered that, when they left, it was with the intention of going to Southampton, and thence to Havre. This trace he immediately followed, and finding himself at fault on his arrival at the latter port, imagined that Trouville would be the most natural place to attract a person such as Mrs. Marsfield had been represented to him.

But Trouville, in the height of the season, is not an easy place in which to prosecute inquiries for people, more especially if the inquirer is by no means certain that those for whom he

is seeking have ever been there at all, or if, having been there, they have left. At length, however, Laurence contrived to discover that three people corresponding to those he sought had left about a fortnight before for Paris, and he was even so fortunate as to ascertain the name of the hotel to which they were bound.

The next train that left Trouville for Paris had him for a passenger; but though, on his arrival, he found he had been on the right track, and that the party he had followed had indeed been Sir Lindsay and the Marsfields, they had already left nearly ten days, and no one seemed clear in which direction they had gone. They had apparently been very undecided, and had talked of various places—the Engadine, the Tyrol, Auvergne, and the Italian lakes among the number—and there seemed positively no clue as to which of these places, if any, had been finally selected.

Laurence felt fairly nonplused. When he had offered to start in search of Sir Lindsay, the difficulties in his path had hardly occurred to him, certainly the idea of the extreme probability of losing all clue in such a place as Paris had never presented itself to his mind. Yet he could not bear to go back, to confess himself vanquished, to encounter Hyacinth's sad eyes and Christian's certain tears. Besides, if he went back unsuccessful, he felt he could not claim his promised reward of a speedy marriage, and yet—he hardly saw what there was for him to do. He had indeed discovered, or at least fancied that he had, that the party had taken their departure by the Lyons railway; but this clue was so vague as to suggest to him the reflection that "all roads lead to Rome." At any rate, there was evidently no use in waiting any longer in Paris; he would try Lyons, and see whether there, or at Dijon, where he would stop as a preliminary, any information could be obtained. Just as he was setting off he received a letter from Christian, in which she said,—

"Hyacinth seems to fancy that Auvergne is the most likely of the places you mention. She has a remembrance of Mr. Marsfield having been very enthusiastic about the delights of a summer tour he had once made there, and of Lindsay's having expressed a wish to see it. She thinks, too, he is more likely to have preferred a fresh country, as they were at the Lakes and in the Engadine last autumn. Of course, though,

he may have changed his mind, and gone to some place that was not mentioned. Still, the knowledge of this fancy may be some help."

In the absence of any other clue, the assistance seemed far greater than it really was. Laurence's spirits rose, and he studied the route to Auvergne with more hopefulness than he had yet felt. But when he reached Lyons the absence of all trace again disconcerted him, and he wrote Christian an epistle the reverse of hopeful.

It was on the morning when this had been received that Hyacinth, pale and worn, was pondering over it on her favorite seat; a few autumnal leaves were floating on the soft air, and falling at her feet, and on her dress. Scamp, quite subdued, poor fellow, by his mistress's depression, lay on her lap, looking wistfully up into her face, and receiving an occasional tear on his long coat; for the weary waiting had weakened Hyacinth terribly, and tears were seldom long absent from her eyes. Suddenly Christian appeared, breathless, and without either hat or shawl, with a telegram in her hand. Hyacinth started to her feet, turning, if possible, whiter than she was before, but trembled so violently that she was forced to reseat herself.

"What does he say?" she faltered. "Oh! Christian, let me see!"—for Christian had not breath to speak. But Christian kept the telegram fast as she gasped,—

"He has found Sir Lindsay!—he is alone at Clermont."

"Alone!—thank God!" It was the first time that Hyacinth had given any sign of objection to her husband's companions, and Christian looked at her, surprised at the fervency of her tone, and feeling—she hardly knew why—that this was some new complication of trouble. "Is there nothing more?" continued Hyacinth. "Has he seen him—spoken to him? What does he say? Oh! Christian, Christian, be quick!—have pity upon me!"

"My poor Hyacinth," said Christian, kneeling down by her, "Laurence has seen him, but—be brave, dear—he is not well."

"He is dead!" cried Hyacinth, rising to her feet, and standing with wide-dilated eyes before her sister. "Where was it?—how?—tell me at once, if you love me!"

"No, no, love," cried Christian, frightened at her vehemence—"indeed he is not dead; but—he is very ill. Here, read the telegram yourself," and, not much impressed with

the success of her first attempt at "breaking news" to any one, she thrust it into her sister's hand.

"*Laurence Courtray, Clermont-Ferrand, to Christian Ettrick, Ettrick Farm, Elmton.*

"*Found, alone, and alarmingly ill—scarlet fever.*"

That was all. Hyacinth sat a moment, as if stunned, and then, springing up, began to walk unsteadily towards the house.

"Hyacinth—dear Hyacinth!" cried Christian, catching her arm, but she was gently shaken off.

"Don't stop me, Christian—there is no time to lose—I can catch the 12.15."

"The 12.15! Hyacinth, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to nurse Lindsay—who else should? Alone, alarmingly ill—oh! my darling, my darling!" she murmured to herself.

"But, Hyacinth," protested Christian, utterly aghast at this unexpected proposal, and hardly knowing what was best to do or say, "you cannot go—you are not strong enough—not fit for such a journey; you will knock yourself up, or you will catch the fever. You cannot go; Laurence will write and tell us everything."

Hyacinth stopped, and faced round upon her.

"It is no use talking, Christian," she said, quickly. "If I thought I should break down at Elmton—if I felt the journey would be too much for me—if I knew I should catch the fever and die, start to go to him I should, and must. It is my duty, if it is nothing else; and oh! to see him even once again!" she moaned, in a tone of anguish that went to Christian's heart.

She attempted no further remonstrance; rapid directions were given to Lady Ettrick's maid, and in a very brief space of time the two sisters were seated in the 12.15 train. Hyacinth had attempted to oppose Christian's accompanying her, but the latter was not to be persuaded.

"No, my dear—if you go, I do," was all she said; but there was a determination in her tone that her sister knew of old, and was well aware it was useless to resist. Besides, she had little strength with which to combat a determined will; the two months had told upon her terribly, and she was very thank-

ful to have Christian to take all the details of the journey off her shoulders. They caught the night mail to Dover, Christian telegraphing from London to tell Laurence to expect them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

> "The jury, passing on a prisoner's life,
> May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two
> Guiltier than him they try."
>
> *Measure for Measure.*

When Sir Lindsay dispatched his wife to Rockcliffe, he had every intention of either joining her there for a few days, or else of sending for her to meet and go down to Scotland with him as soon as ever the Goodwood week was over. He had a great deal to amuse him in London; he was one of the best shots at Hurlingham, and had lately taken up Polo somewhat hotly; he was a good deal at Prince's; and, now that he was left alone, dined and lunched most days in Grosvenor Place; for Lord Cottington, being slightly indisposed, had retired to Marsfield, leaving his son and daughter-in-law to finish the season without him; and Mrs. Marsfield, freed from the restraint of his presence, amused herself without much regard to appearances. She was proud of Sir Lindsay as a conquest, though she was as little in love with him as he was with her, her share of the intimacy being due to vanity, a belief that he adored her, and satisfaction at such a sign of her power as having been able to detach him from his wife, whom most people considered so fascinating, though, for her part, she could not conceive what they saw in her; his, to the pleasure of being courted, made much of, and amused.

But to the outer world the effect was much the same; and though Lindsay was either too careless to be cognizant of the fact, or found it convenient to ignore it, the world had for some little time been raising its eyebrows at his and Mrs. Marsfield's proceedings, and wondering that Mr. Marsfield approved; but that Laura should like anybody, or wish to do anything, was quite sufficient for Philip, who cheerfully gave his countenance to all her proceedings.

Lindsay was at no time a good correspondent—he hated trouble, and generally put off answering any letter not absolutely imperative until too late; besides, he felt a certain awkwardness in writing to Hyacinth. When his anger and annoyance at the drag episode had a little cooled down, he was able to reflect that really, besides that, he had very little to complain of; and though he would not have allowed it for worlds, and felt not the slightest compunction for the harsh and unwarrantable things he had said and insinuated, he still felt that having said them rendered it less easy to write. On the whole it would be easier not to write at all, and, when they met, to act as if nothing had happened. It would avoid scenes; and no doubt his displeasure, and her term of banishment, would make Hyacinth more careful in future.

It had long been settled that Sir Lindsay and the Marsfields were to share the same house at Bognor, for Goodwood—an arrangement which had been made by Sir Lindsay without consulting his wife, and which had naturally been most distasteful to her. They were to go down on the Saturday previous to the races, and it was only a few days before that Mrs. Marsfield suggested a trip to Trouville, as soon as Goodwood was over—they could just go over for a week, see the place, attend the races, and come back long before it was time to go to Scotland.

Sir Lindsay did not much care about the scheme—he was beginning, in spite of all the amusements and distractions wherewith he was surrounded, decidedly to miss his wife's presence—there was no Hyacinth to turn to, so certain to be full of the sympathy, either with his pleasure or his annoyance, which when he had had it he had never appreciated. He had every intention of writing to tell her of his change of plans, and of settling how and when they should meet to proceed to Glen Ettrick, but there was a good deal to do in giving up the house a fortnight before he had intended, having meant to spend a week there after Goodwood; in paying off some of the servants, and settling with others as to their journey to Scotland, and he left London without having written, telling himself that he would have ample time at Bognor.

It is needless to say that such was not the case—every day was filled with engagements, and the thought of the letter

seldom entered his mind; when it did, it was only to be postponed to a more convenient season; and so the week passed, and when he reached Trouville he argued that it was of no use writing from there; he would wait now till he got back to England. The thought that Hyacinth might be uneasy at his prolonged silence did not occur to him; if it had, he would have called it nonsense, and observed that "no news was always good news," that convenient maxim wherewith the idle salve their consciences, and calmly inflict untold pangs of anxiety on their friends.

Mrs. Ettrick had started for Germany before the Trouville scheme had been mooted, her letters therefore were incapable of throwing any light upon her son's movements. Trouville, as every one knows, is a bright and cheery French bathing-place, and Sir Lindsay found himself exceedingly well amused; indeed, a week passed most rapidly in races, excursions, and other amusements, and it was then proposed to spend a few days in Paris, before returning home. Of course it was of no use to write until he knew exactly on what day he would return to England.

It was in Paris that any intelligence respecting his wife first reached him. Several acquaintances passing through, on their way to Switzerland and other places, shook their heads, hoped matters were not so bad as had been represented—such things were always exaggerated; inquired where Lady Ettrick was, and generally condoled with him in a way which he was utterly at a loss to comprehend.

He had seen no English papers since leaving England, and had never even taken the trouble to glance at *Galignani*. Now, however, his curiosity being roused, he looked through a whole file of the latter paper, and was not long in finding what he sought.

His wrath knew no bounds. Utterly disregarding the possibility that his wife's account of the transaction might be vastly different, and that there clearly was some grave misapprehension, as he was represented as having taken steps towards obtaining a divorce, a course of which he had never even dreamed in his wildest moments, he at once believed everything that was alleged against her. Very bitter indeed were his reflections; he loved Hyacinth dearly, but yet it was more his pride that suffered than his affection. Perhaps he might

suffer on the latter score later, but at present his wrath far surpassed his sorrow.

It took him two days to write the cold and bitter letter which rendered his unhappy wife so truly miserable, and it was during that period that he agreed to accompany the Marsfields in some further wandering abroad, Mrs. Marsfield finding the *laissez-aller* life of foreign travel far more congenial to her taste than a prolonged residence at Marsfield, where her conduct was subject to Lord Cottington's strictures. It must have been the love of power, and the reluctance to lose her hold over any one who had once worshiped at her shrine, that could alone have made her desirous of retaining Sir Lindsay as a traveling companion, for his supposed misfortunes had had the effect of rendering him excessively bitter and cynical, and he was positively rude more than once in his strictures on women.

Despite all that he had said to Hyacinth, and the cruel way in which he had insulted her and wounded her feelings by accusing her of flirting with Wilfred Lambert, he had never really believed that there had been anything wrong in her conduct, and it was a terrible blow to him to find that suspicions which he had avowed, although he had not felt them, had in reality been justified by the result. It seemed incredible, yet it was true, that his Hyacinth, his Bluebell, who had affected to love him with such devotion, and had complained so bitterly of his even harmlessly amusing himself with another woman, had, so soon as she had left his roof in partial disgrace, spent hours and hours alone on this lonely island with the man whose name, as he had himself told her, had been disadvantageously coupled with hers. Well, it showed how little women were ever to be either believed or trusted! She had complained of being left alone for hours at a time, but that, as he reflected, was sheer nonsense. Was it not the case invariably? Did it not occur to every woman of her acquaintance? And yet they did not make it an excuse for flirting.

It did not strike him that a young, tender-hearted girl like Hyacinth, new to the world, in which she had never mixed, and without the number of intimate friends usually possessed by young married women of her age, a bride, too, of but a few months' standing, naturally expected and required far more attention and companionship than one who knew every one in

her set intimately, and was completely *au fait* of the world and its ways. In fact, it never struck him that he could in any possible way be to blame, and he pitied himself in proportion to his condemnation of his wife. He repeated over and over again to himself the old arguments, that she had had everything in the world she could require, that her actions had been untrammeled, and that she had been free to go where she pleased, and to amuse herself in any manner that she liked, utterly disregarding the fact that, to an affectionate and clinging nature like hers, such liberty was but poor compensation for the companionship and affection, the society and the domestic happiness, for which she so ardently longed.

As we have said, he was naturally of a somewhat cold temperament, and although his whole capabilities of passion had been roused and stirred to their depths by his love for Hyacinth, still, once possessed of her, his passionate affection subsided, and left himself, as heretofore, the chief and principal object of his regard.

Could Hyacinth but have fathomed this, she would have been happier, for, being a part of him, she would have been well contented that he should love himself, and would have been ready to minister in every possible way to his gratification; but she did not comprehend that all Mrs. Marsfield's attraction lay in her power of flattering and amusing him, and fancied that she was gaining a hold on his affections, when in reality he cared absolutely nothing for her individually. Poor child! she was very young, fresh, and genuine; and love being the guiding star of her own life, she could not realize that it was not necessarily that of others, and that it was quite possible that her husband should be actuated by other motives.

Lindsay really did not comprehend the depth and wealth of the affection that his wife lavished upon him, endowing him with manifold and ideal perfections. The depths, as we have said, had been once stirred, but since then his emotions had resumed the even tenor of their way, and though really fond of his wife, and proud of any admiration that she excited, his feelings were very calm—more as if he had been married ten years than little more than one. So, not comprehending that she could possibly require more attention or show of affection than he had vouchsafed to her, he had no power of making excuses for her, and, regarding her as a willing and incorrigible flirt,

lamented much that he had allowed himself to be led into the weakness of falling in love, instead of following his mother's prudent counsels, and marrying his other cousin, of the possibility of doing which he had never once doubted.

He very speedily made up his mind that, as he wrote to Hyacinth, he would not return to England for a considerable time, but he postponed the threatened letter to his lawyer respecting their separation. He was not usually diffident of his own opinion, or anxious to solicit advice, still it struck him that in an affair of such importance it might be as well to hear what his mother had to say before committing himself to any decided step. To be sure, her thought of Rockcliffe had not been a happy one; still, if Hyacinth and Mr. Lambert were determined to meet, they would probably have contrived to do so anywhere. He felt an almost savage satisfaction in the thought that she must have witnessed his awful death, and wondered what excuses she would invent, and what plausible explanations she would offer for her conduct.

All these reflections did not, as we have said, tend to render him a pleasant companion, still Mrs. Marsfield did not feel inclined to let him go, and was anxious to move on from Paris, so as to divert his thoughts. Various places were suggested, Mrs. Marsfield herself inclining to Baden, or the Engadine, as offering more social inducements than any other places. Lindsay was indifferent, but did not encourage the idea of the Italian lakes, saying he had seen them so recently. Even his unsensitive nature shrank from again visiting the places connected with the associations of last year's honeymoon, and he felt by no means anxious to encounter all the friends and acquaintances that they must meet should Mrs. Marsfield's suggestion be adopted.

When, therefore, Philip Marsfield advocated the claims of Auvergne, as a district new to both of his companions, out of the beaten track of tourists, and affording some beautiful scenery, Sir Lindsay was at once on his side, and Mrs. Marsfield soon yielded, comforting herself for the dullness she anticipated by the reflection that, as it was a new country, as yet little known to tourists, it would have the advantage of being a useful topic of conversation. For scenery for its own sake she cared absolutely nothing, but it was useful to talk about, and, therefore, must necessarily be occasionally en-

dured. Endurance is, in her case, not too strong a term; she was an essentially indolent woman, devoted to luxury, comfort, and ease, and only to be roused to exertion by some strong excitement, such as hunting, or any pursuit in which she could command admiration. The most lovely view the earth could produce would not have recompensed her for the annoyance of having to rise an hour earlier than usual, or of having to dispense with a careful and elaborate toilette. Yet, once started on an excursion, she carefully dissembled her feelings. She loved admiration, and, if she could obtain it in no other way, strove for it as an "expert climber," a "better walker than women in general," a "capital hand at roughing it." Even her husband had no idea how infinitely she would have preferred the smooth ways that led to Baden and luxurious hotels, to the rugged paths and doubtful accommodation of small Auvergnat villages, or he would certainly never have proposed the excursion. He had greatly enjoyed his sojourn at Clermont, and at Mont Dore, even some years before, when the accommodation was presumably rougher, and the means of locomotion certainly scantier than is now the case; and he really believed that she would prefer a new country to the beaten paths so intimately known to her.

They took the journey very quietly, stopping two days at Nevers, though why they did so it would be hard to say, for Philip Marsfield had exhausted all its manifold points of interest on his former visit. Sir Lindsay, never much interested in historical reminiscences, was less than ever inclined to care for the antiquities of the place, though the old Porte de la Croux, with its gray towers and red roof, did elicit an exclamation of admiration from him when he first saw it in the golden light of the evening sun; and Mrs. Marsfield was far more interested in the accommodation attainable at the Hôtel de la France than in the ancient associations of the town, or even in the beautiful doorway of the Romanesque Cathedral of St. Cyr. She made some suggestion here of going to Vichy, but her husband had evidently set his heart on Mont Dore, and Lindsay was too indifferent to support her; so they went on to Clermont, where they spent a few days, taking the proper excursions, in which only one of the party found the slightest enjoyment.

As time passed, and Lindsay's wrath began, by the nature

of things, somewhat to subside, his sorrow for the loss of his wife told more upon him, and he began to long strangely to see her again. Of course, when this feeling first made itself felt, he dismissed it angrily, blaming himself for such weakness; but struggle as he might, it returned, and grew upon him. Perhaps never, since the days of his first infatuation, had his feelings towards her been so deeply stirred as they were at the present moment. As they drove through the cool pine woods, and looked up to the imposing Puys and dark volcanic rocks, he was outwardly laughing and jesting with his companion, but his heart was far away. He was wondering what Hyacinth's feelings were—whether sorrow for Wilfred Lambert's death or remorse for her conduct towards her husband most occupied her. He had no thought of relenting, entertained no doubt as to the truth of that stray paragraph, which it might have seemed but natural that he should have sought to verify; never thought that his letter had been either harsh or hasty. But his heart was very heavy, and often when he was looking at Mrs. Marsfield's regular features and jet-black hair, he saw only the "tip-tilted" nose, the blue eyes, and the chestnut curls he loved so well. With the keen sensitiveness of insatiable vanity, his companion soon observed the change—he performed all the same services, and paid the same attentions which had become habitual, but the spirit was gone from them; the form remained, the soul was far away. It was a new sensation to her to be wearied of—it was generally she who wearied of her admirers, and dismissed them lamenting, and, for the moment, inconsolable. It supplied a new excitement to try to win him back as they strolled under the walnut-trees in the neighborhood, or lionized the still unfinished cathedral, or made excursions to Royat, and into the rich valley of the Limagne, or the volcanic range of the Monts Dôme. But her endeavors were in vain, for though she did not guess it, there was no fascination to be revived—Lindsay had simply cared for her as amusing him, and he no longer cared to be amused.

Mrs. Marsfield found the excursion becoming dull, and daily more and more regretted Baden. There Lindsay, if indifferent, could either have been piqued into attention, or easily replaced; but here there was no one to fall back upon but her husband, whose devotion was too unvarying and

unquestioned to be productive of the smallest excitement, and without excitement life seemed to her hardly worth the having.

She soon proposed a move onwards to Mont Dore, and her companions were nothing loth, Philip being anxious to do the honors of a locality to him so interesting, Lindsay being restless with grief, and, besides, feeling decidedly unwell. His head felt hot and heavy, his throat parched and burning, and as they drove from Clermont Ferrand to Mont Dore, leaving behind them the luxuriant plain, with its wealth of apricot-trees, and rising gradually to the rocky uplands, with their fine gentian-studded turf and glowing heather, he felt as if benefited by the change from the stifling atmosphere of the town to the fresh breezes of the hills, and looked with pleasure on the new landscape of which Philip Marsfield was so anxious to do the honors.

It was the first week in September, and the little watering-place was at its fullest, but it had not been a very good season, and they obtained rooms in the hotel without much difficulty. They were the only English in the place, save a young doctor and his wife on their wedding-tour, the rest of the visitors being principally French or Belgians. None of our party requiring the waters, they gave themselves up to excursions, under Philip's able ciceronage; but Lindsay's indisposition increased. While their way led under the pine-trees, with their long hanging beards of gray moss, he bore it pretty well; but on the third day, when the extraordinary clearness of the atmosphere tempted them to the ascent of the Pic de Sancy, he gave in at the end of the two hours' ride, and lay down almost unconscious in the shade of a rock, while his companions completed the ascent on foot. Instead of seeing the extinct volcanoes, crater lakes, and fantastic peaks that surrounded him on every side, there rose before his eyes the Glen at Ettrick in all its summer beauty; the huge beech seemed to shelter him from the burning sun, instead of the volcanic rock; wild roses and feathery ferns waved before his eyes, instead of the burnt, hay-like grass that really surrounded him; the sound of the wind among the rocks changed into the lapping of the lake among the bulrushes; and when the Marsfields returned to where they had left him, they found him unconscious.

What was to be done? At first they imagined it was only sleep, that, being unwell, the heat had overcome him; but it was soon apparent that something far more serious was the matter. Perhaps never was vision so welcome as that of the young Englishman, Dr. Foster, and his pretty wife, making their way slowly up the steep ascent. Philip went to meet him at once, and explained the state of the case. Dr. Foster looked very grave.

"I thought him looking very ill last night," he said, "very weak and feverish. I had no idea you were thinking of the Pic to-day, or, slight as our acquaintance is, I should have taken the liberty of warning him. I can hardly say at present, but it looks like slight sunstroke."

One thing was clear, that the invalid, though slightly restored to consciousness, was in no condition to ride down the mountain. Dr. Foster improvised a species of hammock, formed of the rugs and shawls that had been brought by the ladies in case of rain, and himself superintended the guides who carried Sir Lindsay down again to Mont Dore. Though no longer in a state of stupor, he was very clearly not awake to what was passing around him, muttering constantly about shady trees and purling brooks, and calling incessantly upon Hyacinth to come to him.

It was a weary journey homewards, and when they had reached the hotel Dr. Foster was a long time closeted with his patient before he emerged to give his verdict. When at length he did so, he looked extremely grave.

"A slight sunstroke," he said. "One that in ordinary circumstances would have been of small consequence, but is serious in connection with the other malady. He has scarlet fever, and it will probably be a severe attack."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Mrs. Marsfield sprang to her feet.

"Scarlet fever!" she almost shrieked; "and he has been with us constantly! Philip, order a carriage at once. We shall have time to get to Clermont to-night. I'll go and tell Jennings to be ready."

And without another word she flew from the room, and was heard inciting her maid to haste. Philip was following her, when Dr. Foster stopped him.

"Excuse me," he said, "but do you really mean to fly in

this way, and abandon the friend who is traveling with you to the tender mercies of strangers?"

Mr. Marsfield looked very uncomfortable; left to himself he would never have thought of infection, but would have nursed his friend with all the little zeal of which he was capable; but he was too accustomed to yield to his wife's every wish to be able even to think of opposing her, and muttered something about its being imperative to remove Mrs. Marsfield from all danger of infection.

"She need be in no danger here beyond what she has already run," returned Dr. Foster; "but I do not conceal from you that the gentleman——"

"Sir Lindsay Ettrick," put in Philip.

"That Sir Lindsay is already exceedingly ill, and will probably become much worse."

"I will go and talk to Mrs. Marsfield," said Philip, feeling guilty of terrible cowardice in deserting his friend, yet unable to resist the habit that caused him so implicitly to follow his wife's wishes.

As he expected, Mrs. Marsfield would hear of no delay; she even upbraided him hotly for having paused about ordering the carriage, and thereby causing her to remain longer in danger. "She would leave Mont Dore if she walked all the way to Clermont," she declared, and even set off with her maid on foot, leaving her husband to pick her up in the carriage.

Mr. Marsfield delayed seeing Dr. Foster again until just as he was starting, and then explained hurriedly how grieved he was to leave his friend ill, but that he could not possibly expose his wife to a danger which was so greatly enhanced by her excessive terror of the malady; hoped that Dr. Foster was going to remain at Mont Dore, and would give Sir Lindsay the benefit of his professional care; and, almost without waiting for a reply, sprang into the carriage, and started to overtake his wife.

An expression of unspeakable contempt was on Dr. Foster's face as he turned back into the hotel. Not knowing the whole state of the case, he believed Philip to be as nervously terrified as his wife, thereby doing him great injustice, and could not resist expressing warmly to his bride his indignation at the desertion of the sick man.

"It is lucky we are here, or he would be left to the mercy

of the French doctors, and bled to death," he said; and Mrs. Foster heartily agreed in rejoicing that they were there to be of service, though it was an unwelcome and somewhat gloomy interruption to their brief honeymoon tour.

But when, the next day, Lindsay grew alarmingly worse, Dr. Foster was in despair at having been so occupied by the heartlessness of the Marsfields as to have quite omitted to make any inquiries respecting where his patient's friends were to be found, or to whom he was to write. Sir Lindsay himself was utterly unable to afford information, being in a sort of comatose stupor, and though the doctor searched every paper he could find, none gave the slightest clue. The name was totally unknown to him, and it really seemed as if this young Englishman had dropped from the skies into a small watering-place in Auvergne, and might—nay, as the days went on, it seemed probably would—die on his hands, without his having the power to communicate with a single relative.

Meanwhile, the Marsfields, having seen as much as they wished of Auvergne, had gone on to Vichy; but here Mrs. Marsfield was speedily bored, and at length they determined to go to Aix-les-Bains before turning their steps homewards. Philip often thought with compunction of Lindsay lying friendless and alone in a foreign hotel, but Mrs. Marsfield declined to feel any anxiety, averring that, as an English doctor was with him, it was all right.

To reach Aix it was necessary to pass through Lyons, where they spent a night, and it was owing to their doing so that Laurence Courtray found the long-lost clue to Sir Lindsay's whereabouts. He did not know the Marsfields by sight, and it was the merest chance that brought him into the corridor at the moment that Philip was directing a waiter to find Mrs. Marsfield's maid. The name caught his ear; he stopped, bowed, inquired if he had the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Marsfield, and in a few moments was in possession of the whole state of affairs. Before ten minutes were over, he had discovered that a train was just starting for Clermont, and was seated in it, anathematizing Mrs. Marsfield in no measured terms, but thanking Providence for having put him on the track at last. From Clermont he telegraphed to Christian, before setting out for Mont Dore.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light-quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

Marmion.

NEVER before had Christian realized the possibility of feeling so utterly ignorant and helpless as she did when fairly started on her journey with Hyacinth. If her belief in feminine supremacy had not been killed before, her feelings of timidity, ignorance, and general discomfort must have given it its death-blow. She had never set foot off British soil, and dreaded unspeakably her first experience of foreign travel unsupported and unassisted. It is true that Hyacinth had considerable experience, but it was only necessary to look at her to see that little help could be expected in that quarter. She sat, pale and wan, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and it was very evident that her mind was too completely fixed on what might be happening at Mont Dore, to enable her to be of the least practical use in getting there.

Christian reflected ruefully that Laurence could never have either intended or expected them to set off the instant his telegram arrived, or he would not have added at the end that promise of writing. She hoped he would not be vexed—at any rate, she could not help it; she was quite powerless to restrain her sister, and she could not have let her go alone now, worn out and unfit to travel as she was. But like all things much dreaded, the reality of the journey proved infinitely less terrible than its anticipation. As we have said, they caught the night mail in London, found the sea smooth as glass—an immense relief to Christian, who had dreaded unspeakably being ill and incapable of taking care of Hyacinth—and got a carriage to themselves and the maid at Calais. If only she could have seen her sister sleep! But despite all the pains she took to arrange her the most comfortable couch

possible under the circumstances, whenever she glanced in her direction the blue eyes were still open, still fixed in the same vacant stare.

Christian felt greatly alarmed—surely something terribly wrong must be the matter with her, or Bluebell would not look like that! She spoke to and endeavored to rouse her, and Hyacinth would answer rationally, rouse herself for the moment, and then subside once more into the former stony calm. The first thing that seemed really to affect her was to find, when they had driven across Paris and reached the other station, that the train for Nevers had been gone just ten minutes, and that there was no train that would suit till nearly five in the afternoon, and that it was impossible to reach Clermont-Ferrand before six the next morning. This information completely roused her—she questioned and cross-questioned the various officials, till even French patience and politeness were sorely tried; and when at length convinced that earlier movement was hopeless, sat down on a bench and burst into tears. Though hardly experienced enough to know what a salutary relief they were to the overcharged brain, Christian felt duly grateful for anything that had broken the stony stillness that had begun to terrify her. She soothed her sister as well as she could, persuaded her to go to a hotel, swallow some food, and take some rest, and had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a calm sleep. Though calm, it was not however of long duration, anxiety to be in time causing Hyacinth to insist on being at the station fully two hours before the train started; but short as it was, it did good; and Christian was relieved to see that, though she looked worn and fragile, the fixed gaze and preoccupied manner had entirely disappeared. She had busied herself with inquiries respecting their journey, and was dismayed to find that, when the thirteen hours traveling necessary to reach Clermont-Ferrand were completed, there remained six hours more before they could find themselves at Mont Dore.

Nearly forty-eight hours of incessant traveling, with only the halt in Paris, is a considerable undertaking, and Hyacinth was little fit for such fatigue; still, Christian knew it would be useless as well as cruel to urge delay upon her. Who could tell what might be occurring in that remote village,—whether the slightest delay might not be the cause of their being too

late, of Hyacinth losing the satisfaction of being reconciled to her husband?

Lindsay's name had never passed his wife's lips since the tidings of his illness had arrived; in her heart she had not the slightest shadow of hope. She pictured herself arriving just too late—too late to close the dark eyes she loved so well, and that had once looked so adoringly upon her; too late to hear the cruel accusations, made in haste and in error, withdrawn; too late to tell him all, and to assure him of her unswerving affection. All the anger she had not unnaturally felt at his neglect and harshness had utterly passed away; he was again her adored Lindsay, the only one for whom she ever had cared, or ever could care. Even Mrs. Marsfield faded into insignificance now. Had not Laurence said he was alone? There never could have been anything between them, or she never could have left him alone, ill in a strange place! It was doubtless only her own jealous affection that had made her so intolerant of their intimacy; and it was not wonderful that Lindsay should have been wearied and annoyed by her groundless complaints, which must have seemed to him a want of confidence on his wife's part.

And so she continued to reproach herself, taking, like a true woman, on her own shoulders all the blame, of which she deserved not the slightest particle, and prepared to endure, without a murmur, any reproaches that Lindsay might make to her, if only she found him alive. If—that was the question!

All through that long and weary night, when the hours seemed never to pass, and the train crawled slowly on, at what appeared, to her anxiety, walking pace; all through that long drive, as, leaving Clermont and its valley, with its walnut and apricot-trees behind them, they climbed slowly upwards towards their destination, seeing the rising sun illumine one dark Puy after another, catching first the rocky summit of the Pic de Sancy; through that last moment when, turning into the volcanic valley, Mont Dore itself lay before them, that terrible if—that fearful possibility—was her sole thought. If she were too late, if she could never again pour her affection into his ear, never hear from his lips that he understood and acquitted her, it seemed to her as if life would be utterly unbearable—as if there would be nothing left for her but to die.

Though as a rule timid to an excessive degree about infection, she never gave even a thought to the fact that the malady from which Lindsay suffered was violently infectious—to be with him was all her thought; that once insured, come what would, she should be at peace—a state of feeling that would have been quite incomprehensible to Mrs. St. Orbe, Mrs. Ettrick, or indeed to any of those who were inclined to misjudge and condemn her, but who had little idea of the utter and complete devotion with which she regarded Lindsay.

At length the weary journey was over, the goal was reached, and the very first sight to greet their eyes was Laurence Courtray, standing outside the hotel door, in earnest confabulation with Dr. Foster. Their appearance was hardly a surprise to him; he had guessed that Hyacinth would never rest till she was herself on the spot, and had entertained a tolerable certainty that Christian would accompany her, but he was hardly prepared for the rapidity of their journey, and had not expected them until the next day at the earliest. Hyacinth sprang to the ground almost before the carriage stopped.

"What news?" she said, in a voice husky and almost inaudible. "Is he alive?"

"Alive—yes, but very, very ill. I am glad you are come. Dear Lady Ettrick, indeed you cannot go to him,"—as she turned to enter the house—"the fever is of a malignant type, and most infectious. Dr. Foster will tell you the same; he has two excellent nurses, Sœurs de Charité from Clermont."

"You will take me to him at once," said Hyacinth, turning to Dr. Foster. "If you do not, I must find my own way. Nothing shall keep me from him. It is my right!—he is my husband!"

"But the infection, Lady Ettrick," began Dr. Foster; but she stopped him.

"I care nothing for that. I will do anything you require, take any precautions you may judge necessary, but my place is by my husband's bedside, and nothing you can say will prevent my going to nurse him."

There was a determination both in her tone and her appearance that convinced Dr. Foster that further opposition was useless, and, with a glance at Laurence that conveyed his

sense of the fact, he turned into the hotel, closely followed by Hyacinth.

"Laurence, is there any hope?" questioned Christian, when they were left alone.

"No more than must exist while life remains," he answered, gravely. "He has never been conscious since I arrived; but I cannot be too thankful that I came, or we might never have heard what had become of him. The Marsfields fled in such terror that they never even thought of giving Dr. Foster any clue to his friends."

"Fled!—do you mean to say they knew he was so ill, and yet left him alone to die among strangers?" exclaimed Christian, scarcely able to believe her ears. "Oh! it is impossible! —they could never have been so wicked; besides, they would have written."

"It is as I tell you," answered Laurence, and he proceeded to detail all the circumstances of the fortunate encounter at Lyons, and everything that had occurred since his arrival at Mont Dore. He had not himself seen Sir Lindsay, Dr. Foster, when he found that he was not a very intimate friend, having urged him not to do so, assuring him that there was nothing that he could do that would not be infinitely better done by the two nurses whom, immediately on perceiving the gravity of the case, he had summoned from Clermont—that a strange face in the room might irritate the patient, impervious as he seemed to outward influences, and pointing out the advantage of his avoiding the risk of infection.

"Of course, if I could have done any good, I should not have minded that," pursued Laurence; "but when he told me I might really do harm, it was different. What a mercy it was that he was here, for, as he says, the French doctors would have done nothing but bleed him."

Here Dr. Foster made his appearance, and beckoned Laurence to a little distance from Christian.

"A better symptom than I could have hoped," he said; "he evidently recognized her; this being the case, her presence at this crisis is of the greatest value. Is she usually strong? She looks terribly fragile, and the journey has been a great strain upon her."

"Yes, she is fairly strong," answered Laurence, "but" (feeling that he had better confide in the doctor at once) "for

the last two months she has had considerable strain upon her mind, and it has told upon her terribly."

"I guessed something of the sort," said the doctor. "Well, I am sorry, but we must risk it; it would be everything to him to see his wife's face when he wakes; all his wandering has been about her, and murmuring brooks, and waving trees. Except in the determination not to quit his side, Lady Ettrick seems perfectly docile, swallowed the belladonna I gave her without a word, and assented to all my directions at once. By the way, you had better give the other lady—her sister?—strange, the absence of any likeness—you had better give her some belladonna at once. We will do our best to escape with only one case, but I fear it is almost hopeless."

After the first recognition of his wife, which had been so slight that none but an experienced eye could have perceived it, Lindsay relapsed once more into the feverish torpor, broken only by intervals of low, murmuring, rambling talk. How Hyacinth strained her ears to catch his words, and how thankful she felt to catch nothing but her own name, and to realize that he had gone back mentally to the happy time at Ettrick, when they were all in all to each other; she perfectly understood all the allusions, knew full well the lapping of the water among the bulrushes, the whisper of the wind among the trees, of which he muttered. She had had little hope, she thought, as she had sat counting the hours during those two miserable nights of travel, but she knew now that her most desponding thought had been sanguine compared with any which she now entertained. He looked so worn and ill, his head closely shaved, his cheeks hollow, and his eyes wild with fever when they were not closed in stupor; recovery seemed absolutely hopeless; she could only pray for a return of consciousness—for a few moments' power to comprehend what she had to tell, that she might have the comfort of feeling that he died forgiving her. Still, if this blessing were not to be vouchsafed to her, it was inexpressibly soothing to feel that, when off its balance, his mind had reverted to the old happy days of love and confidence, instead of dwelling on later and more troubled scenes.

The Sœur de Charité, who had been prepared for hysterics and fainting-fits, or, at least, for floods of tears and cries of despair, hardly knew what to make of the pale, silent lady

who knelt immovable by the bedside, her eyes fixed on the invalid's face, or else bent her head on her clasped hands in silent prayer.

"*Elles sont froides ces Anglaises,*" was the decision with which she at length dismissed the subject, although feeling duly grateful for that same coldness, as saving her from the necessity of care and assistance save to her own patient.

Hyacinth seldom either moved or spoke; she did what Dr. Foster told her, swallowed either food or cordial mechanically, and without resistance, only opposing one thing—any suggestion of rest, that would necessitate her leaving the sick-room for a single instant. She would rest in the large chair, but she placed it so that Lindsay's face was in full view, and the Sœur averred that her eyes never closed. Not knowing the circumstances, or being aware of her agonizing dread that, if she slumbered for an instant, Lindsay might die without a word, leaving her to drag through what life might remain to her wretched and unforgiven, Dr. Foster was puzzled by her persistence, and, when it had continued for three days, considerably disturbed by apprehensions of its effect upon her health.

"It cannot last," he said to Laurence—"she must break down. Cannot you get her sister to urge prudence upon her?"

But Laurence, who, knowing the state of the case, fathomed to a certain extent the nature of Hyacinth's feelings, shook his head, and replied that it would be of no use—that things must take their course; and that he believed it would do her less harm to leave her alone than to disturb her. That night the crisis came. After hours of violent fever and excitement, Lindsay fell into a profound slumber, and while it lasted Hyacinth remained on her knees by his side, dreading that in his excessive weakness he might pass away in his sleep, and her chance should be lost. But she was not doomed to be so severely tried. Late in the afternoon he awoke, and though puzzled at his surroundings, and evidently bewildered, he quite certainly recognized her, for he put out his hand, and faintly murmured her name.

"Lindsay! dear Lindsay!" and she bent down and kissed him fervently; but almost before she had done so, his eyes had again closed, and he was once more asleep. Dispatching

the nurse for Dr. Foster, she resumed her watch, her hand clasped in his. For the first time she dared to hope, for the first time tears rose to her eyes and streamed in torrents down her cheeks. It seemed now as if her anxious watching might be rewarded, as if he might live to tell her he once more trusted her.

Dr. Foster soon came, delighted at the improvement, for which he had hardly dared to hope, and shared her watch till the next awakening, when he administered a cordial, and Lindsay, after a few murmured words, hardly intelligible even to his wife, to whom they were addressed, once more sank to rest.

"Let me implore you to lie down now, Lady Ettrick," said Dr. Foster. "The crisis is safely passed, and probably this sleep will continue for a considerable period. If you will take the rest you so much need now, you will be refreshed, and of use when he is well enough to recognize you and enjoy your society. No strength will bear such a strain as you have put on yours for the last five days without breaking down at last, so be warned in time and take rest now, that you may be of use later. I will promise to call you if anything occurs."

It was sorely against her inclination. She felt so keenly, vividly awake, as if sleep had become a thing no longer requisite to her; still a certain swimming before her eyes, and buzzing in her ears, warned her that after all there was a limit to her strength, and so at length she yielded, on the understanding that she was to be called the moment he awoke.

"But as I have given her a tolerably strong sleeping-draught, I hope he will wake several times before she does," was Dr. Foster's report to Laurence. "It would certainly require some serious symptoms to induce me to disturb her."

Fatigue and the anodyne combined did their work. Hyacinth slept undisturbedly for more than twelve hours, and awoke unspeakably refreshed.

"How is he? I must go to him," were her first words to Christian, who, at her first movement, was bending over her.

"He is better, love—quite free from fever. Dr. Foster is delighted. He is asleep now, so lie quiet and rest a little longer."

But Hyacinth was not easy till she was back at her post;

and Lindsay, waking soon after, greeted her with a smile that amply repaid her for any loss of rest. He was terribly weak, though gaining strength every hour; and it soon became apparent that he was dimly conscious that something had occurred, something that affected him and Hyacinth, but that he had forgotten its nature for the present, and was vainly striving to recall it. He would lie and look at her in a puzzled, troubled sort of way, and pass his hand across his eyes, until the sleep of exhaustion would again overcome him. Hyacinth watched him anxiously, longing with almost feverish eagerness to make all clear and straight between them, yet restrained partly by the dread of exciting him, partly by anxiety as to whether or not he would be as satisfied, as she hoped, with her explanation. It seemed impossible that he should not be, and yet—she feared, doubted, dreaded, while she longed for the moment when her fate would be decided. The looked-for moment came in the still hush of a late September afternoon. Hyacinth had been out for the daily half-hour insisted upon by Dr. Foster, and, a slight flush on her pale cheeks, was leaning back in the huge carved oaken chair, gazing dreamily out into the golden sunshine. All was still save the hum of the bees in the garden below—one of those still, glorious days when to sit still and dream is to feel that life is indeed a blessing—one of those afternoons when every one, however energetic his temperament, sympathizes more or less with the description of the bliss of the lotus-eaters. Lindsay lay with his eyes closed, and his wife believed that he slept, until he startled her by saying,—

"Hyacinth, how came I here?"

Somehow, often as she had pictured to herself the re-awakening of his memory, this method of its commencement had not occurred to her, and she stammered somewhat, in her dread of awakening recollection too rapidly, as she replied,—

"You were traveling here, and were taken ill."

A pause—he was evidently trying to remember something; then he said,—

"Was I traveling with you?"

The blood rushed to her face.

"No," she answered, in a very low voice. "I was in England."

"But some one was with me. We went up the Pic de Sancy. It was so hot. I didn't go alone."

"No." She judged it would be better to tell him who had been his companions, rather than let him excite himself by the effort to recollect. "You were traveling with the Marsfields."

"The Marsfields!" Another long pause—he was too weak to think quickly; then at length, "Are they here?"

A stab to poor Hyacinth! Was it, could it be possible his thoughts were still centred on that woman who had left him to die or to recover as he might, with never a thought of womanly aid and nursing?

"No," she said, quietly. "Mrs. Marsfield was afraid of the fever. They left the moment they knew you were ill."

Another long pause—this time for nearly an hour; then in a low voice he said,—

"I can't remember. I don't know what was the fever, and what was reality. Hyacinth, was there a cloud between us? I seem to have some dim shadow—is it a dream, or what?"

The moment had come. Kneeling by his side, and taking his hand in hers, she whispered,—

"Lindsay, my own husband, it was no dream—it was a reality; but a reality born only of misapprehension. You believed too easily that I had failed in my duty to you, that I had cared for and encouraged the attentions of another; I was foolish and careless, and in a moment of irritation you accused me of flirting, and sent me away from you. Then, when we were separated, you saw a wicked lie in a newspaper, and, oh! Lindsay, you believed it—you wrote to tell me you did, and that you would never see me again, and you nearly broke my heart. Lindsay, I have prayed day and night that if you must die—which for days I thought you must—you might at least recover consciousness, and hear me swear that never in my inmost thought have I been untrue to you." And bending her head down on his hand, she burst into a passion of tears. With a great effort Lindsay raised himself, bent over, and kissed her.

"I believe you," was all he said; but no eloquence could have been so much to her as those simple words.

"All is right between us," she said to Christian that night; and Christian embraced her silently, mingling tears of joy with hers.

The weight of uncertainty as to what had occurred being removed from his mind, seemed to have a most beneficial

effect upon Sir Lindsay, who began to mend apace. His next inquiries were as to how Hyacinth had arrived at Mont Dore, which necessitated a considerable amount of family history, and first introduced the fact of Christian's engagement. At this his amazement knew no bounds—though he had at one time imagined her ready to accept him, he had since believed her devoted to a state of single blessedness, and teased Hyacinth considerably by inquiries as to how she had disposed of many of her anti-matrimonial theories. However, his wife was too thankful to hear his laugh once more to object to anything that he could do—even to his ridiculing her darling Christian; and when he was able at length to join the party down-stairs, Christian herself, though blushing furiously and glancing shyly at Laurence, fearing that he might be hurt for her, joined merrily in his jokes at her expense.

Having seen Lindsay well on the road towards convalescence, Dr. Foster took his departure, accompanied by the blessings and warmest good wishes of those to whom he had been of such infinite succor. It had been a somewhat dismal honeymoon for his pretty little wife, for during the first days of Lindsay's illness he had rarely left the patient's bedside; but she bore it well, entering into the true spirit of her husband's profession, and feeling nothing but thankfulness that he should have been on the spot when so sorely needed. Still, she could not help an occasional regretful thought of the charming tour in the Pyrenees which they had lost, for Dr. Foster had already outstayed the limits he had allowed himself for his holiday, and they were obliged to hasten at once back to London.

Thanks to the doctor's precautions, the rest of the party had escaped infection; but Hyacinth was worn nearly to a shadow, and he gave it as his decided opinion that both for her sake and her husband's the next winter should be spent in a warm climate. He remained long enough to superintend Lindsay's removal to Clermont-Ferrand, for the season at Mont Dore had long been ended, and the autumn winds blew cold and bleak down the valley.

Laurence devoted himself to the amusement of the invalid in a manner that was the more praiseworthy as he had conceived a feeling of strong dislike towards his future brother-in-law. Having a very sincere affection for Hyacinth, and

fully appreciating the gentle womanliness of her nature, it seemed to him that any one who could neglect her for such a cold, heartless creature as Mrs. Marsfield, must be utterly unworthy of affection such as his wife lavished upon him. But when he knew Lindsay intimately, he began to modify his opinion. True, he had behaved with much coldness and selfishness, but it was very clear that it was from no lack of affection for Hyacinth, but almost entirely from thoughtlessness; he had never been accustomed to think of others, and had never realized how selfish and self-seeking had been his conduct, or how acutely his wife had felt his neglect. Laurence also soon came to understand what his feelings had been towards Mrs. Marsfield. They were chiefly those of gratified vanity at finding himself still able to touch a chord that had vibrated of old, and at being distinguished by the notice of a very handsome woman; and partly the pleasure of being amused without having to give himself any annoyance, all the trouble of the flirtation being taken off his hands.

In short, like so many more among us, Lindsay had been rather weak than wicked, and Laurence hoped that the shock of realizing all the mischief which his weakness had wrought might prove a salutary lesson to him for the future, more especially as it was impossible to doubt that his love for Hyacinth was strong and enduring. One day, after their arrival at Clermont, he had ventured to advert to the subject of the fatal paragraph, and had succinctly related his journey to Rockcliffe, and the complete refutation with which he was provided. Lindsay heard him in silence, shook his hand warmly, and at length said,—

"I must have been mad ever to doubt my Hyacinth! Poor child! I was very harsh. I never reflected how differently she had been brought up from all the fashionable women around her, or realized that, from ignorance of the world, she might do things in all innocence capable of a very different construction. Thank you for what you have told me; but from the moment I recognized her by my bedside all shadow of suspicion disappeared. My mother should have warned me that I was hasty; but—she never liked Hyacinth—they did not suit each other. But my sister—surely she must have defended her from calumny?"

"I am afraid Mrs. St. Orbe hardly understood her," said

Laurence, who did not like to say what he knew to be the case—that most of the mischief-making and evil reports had originated with Ursula. "But"—turning to a more cheerful subject—"Lady Ettrick never can say enough in praise of Captain St. Orbe. He seems quite to have won her heart; and indeed Lady Tynedale is nearly as enthusiastic."

"He always was a good fellow!" was all Lindsay's reply, but a vow of gratitude was registered deep in his heart.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal. Each fulfills
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single, pure, and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating with one full stroke,
Life."

The Princess.

It is on a lovely morning in the ensuing April that we again have a glimpse of the various actors in this brief history. Agreeably to Dr. Foster's advice, no idea had been entertained of returning to England before the early summer. Although his recovery had been a complete one, it was long before Sir Lindsay regained either strength or energy, and the strain once removed from her mind, and the necessity for exertion over, Hyacinth's nerves and strength proved to be in a terribly shattered state. The thought of the soft air and the *dolce far niente* of the sunny south was pleasant to both of them, and, as neither felt much inclined for general society, Nice and Cannes were passed over, and Mentone, with its heavenly climate and lovely views, selected in their stead.

Christian proposed returning home, believing that it was her duty to return to her own appointed place; but Hyacinth would not hear of it, and Lindsay was so thoroughly changed that she was able frankly to accept the invitation so cordially given, and to believe that he really wished her to join them.

Of course, Christian having consented, Laurence Courtray's

presence, as forming one of the party, was a matter of course; so, as soon as Lindsay's returning strength enabled them to leave Clermont-Ferrand, Auvergne was left behind, and by gentle stages they reached the Mediterranean.

The Riviera had seemed surpassingly beautiful to Hyacinth when, but one short year before, her eyes had feasted on the changing hues of the sapphire sea, or rested in unwearying admiration on lovely flowers and luxuriant foliage; but now, when she had lived through a twelvemonth so full of emotions that it seemed as if years must separate it from that happy, careless honeymoon-time; when she had known care and sorrow, that, though it had happily now passed away, must leave a remembrance, a faint shadow of what had been, over all her future life; and when, by having been made to suffer, all her feelings and perceptions were deepened and intensified, the beauty of the scenery, the richness of the coloring, the soft balminess of the sweet southern air, the rich perfume of the orange-blossoms, the perfect quiet, and, above all, the constant companionship of her husband, as gentle and as adoring as he had been in those halcyon days which she had feared were gone forever—all these things, coupled with the sight of her darling sister, the person she loved next to Lindsay, happy with the lover of her choice, formed a whole which seemed to her nothing less than a foretaste of Paradise.

At first the husband and wife generally sat or strolled together, while the lovers wandered off on more adventurous excursions than were suited to their invalid companions. And in these solitary rambles each learned better to know and to esteem the other, though Christian, while happy in Laurence's love, could not restrain her wonder at how he had learned to care for her in the days of her presumptuous folly. She was indeed a different person from the self-satisfied and somewhat dictatorial Christian with whom we first made acquaintance, and it was never without burning blushes of shame and annoyance that she recalled the absurd speeches which had then seemed to her so wise and so unanswerable. Laurence was well aware of her feelings, and never allowed himself in any way to refer to her former views or complete conversion, a generosity which deepened Christian's love almost to adoration. She appreciated with a swelling heart the delicacy and the tact with which he invariably turned any conversation that might lead to the sub-

ject, and felt that no devotion could ever convey one half that she felt for him. And Laurence, having, from the transparent truthfulness of her nature, a pretty clear knowledge of her feelings and sentiments, was well repaid for the forbearance he exercised, and congratulated himself daily on the rich treasure of the nature he had won. The second love, in which he had so utterly disbelieved, promised him a far richer harvest of happiness than that first one, in which his views of feminine truth and honor had suffered such disastrous shipwreck.

There will be many a pleasant memory of this happy time treasured up between the leaves of the sketch-book which accompanies the lovers in their rambles, and which Laurence diligently fills with suggestions for future pictures; while Christian reads to him the poetry which hitherto she has neglected for her own special studies, or sits silent, too happy to speak, admiring the wealth of beauty, both of form and color, presented to her gaze.

Gradually, as the balmy air restored the strength and energy of the invalids, Lindsay and Hyacinth would join them in more extended excursions. They drove to Bordighera, and rambled amidst the palm-trees; they patronized the sure-footed donkeys, and by their aid ascended the beautiful mountain ridges, and there, sheltered by the pine-trees from the sun, gazed out through the warm air over the purple sea. There was hardly a goat-track among the olives or the pine-woods with which they did not soon become familiar. Grimaldi and Castellare, St. Agnese and Roccobruna, with its ruined castle and crimson rocks, were soon household words to them, and they never tired of the open-air life, of watching the changing hues of the sunny sea, of gathering the lovely flowers that grew everywhere in profusion, of inhaling the delicate scent of the lemon-blossoms, or of sketching the picturesque figures of the girls who bring the fragrant fruit in baskets poised on their graceful heads from the sheltered nooks where alone the lemon-tree grows and thrives.

It was a period of perfect rest, of complete holiday, such as occurs but seldom in this busy world, and they fully appreciated the charm, and feared to break the spell by referring to the time when they must go forth once more into the hurry and bustle of life. The first sound from the outer world that penetrated their Paradise was the intelligence, conveyed in a

letter from Mrs. Ettrick, of the death of Mrs. Marsfield from a fall in the hunting-field. They were too much engrossed with each other and their lotos-eating life to pay much attention to the newspapers, and, had it not been for Mrs. Ettrick's letters, would have been hopelessly behindhand in knowledge of what was passing in the world. Hyacinth could hardly analyze accurately her own feelings. Horror at the accident, and at the sudden death of one with whom her life had been so much mixed up, sincere sorrow for the bereaved husband, of whose misery none who knew him could doubt; a secret sense of relief that never again need she dread that baneful influence exerted over her husband; anger at herself for even thinking it possible that such could ever again affect him, yet an irrepressible thankfulness that all cause of anxiety was forever removed,—all these feelings possessed her by turns, and left her alternately sorrowful, jubilant, and shocked at herself for being so.

Lindsay was naturally distressed at the sudden death of one he had known so well, but his vanity, not his heart, had been the tie binding him to Mrs. Marsfield, and, though shocked at the catastrophe, it was only as he would have been at its occurrence to any other of his friends. All his former adoration for Hyacinth had returned, deepened by the feeling that he had neglected and injured her, and yet been unable to shake her devotion; he could only wonder how he could ever have thought any other woman worthy of a moment's attention.

Towards the end of February, when the invalids had been for some time fully restored to health, Laurence Courtray began to plead with Christian for an early marriage. It had been intended that the ceremony should take place on their return to England, but, as he urged, there was no necessity for delaying it so long. If they were married quietly at Mentone they could spend their honeymoon in Italy, and she would see Florence, and the studio in Rome where he had worked so long. This latter was a strong inducement to Christian. She marveled at and reverenced Laurence's talent, and longed to see the abode where his principal triumphs had been achieved; if they were not married till their return to England, there would be no possibility of Rome before the following winter. Besides, her heart was too entirely his for

her to be able to resist his entreaties, and it was soon settled that the wedding should take place in the middle of March.

Hyacinth often smiled to herself when recalling all Christian's former theories, and the particular horror she had always had of a woman's being obliged to lose her name when she married. There was little chance of such utterances now. The stern, self-asserting Christian had entirely vanished, and in her stead was left a woman even more loving, trusting, and yielding than the generality of her sex. If she had had her way, everything she possessed would have been settled upon Laurence, but this he would by no means allow, and she was forced reluctantly to acquiesce in the arrangement by which, should she have no children, Ettrick would revert to Hyacinth.

When the announcement that the marriage was to take place abroad was made, Lady Tynedale wrote at once to say that they should come out on purpose to be present, and to hope that Christian would allow her two little girls the delight of being bridesmaids. All her former prejudice against her elder cousin had been swept away by the devotion to Hyacinth which she had witnessed while the sisters were together at Tynedale, and she willingly confessed that her husband's insight into character, as evidenced by his predictions respecting Christian, had been superior to her own. Mrs. Ettrick wrote, condemning the idea as great folly—how could Christian possibly get her trousseau?—a remark which greatly amused its object, who avowed herself quite indifferent as to whether her full paraphernalia were purchased before or after her marriage.

"Lindsay," said Hyacinth, the morning of the receipt of Lady Tynedale's letter, as they sat together on a rock, looking out over the purple sea, watching the snowy line of breakers at the foot of Cape St. Martin, and faintly distinguishing the dim outline of the Isle St. Marguerite, while the soft air blew gently in their faces, laden with the scent of orange- and lemon-blossom, of roses and starry jessamine—"Lindsay, couldn't we get Helen to choose us a present for Christian? We can get nothing suitable here."

Lindsay smiled.

"I have thought of that already. I wrote to Lady Tynedale at once."

"Lindsay! what did you say?"

"I asked her to take charge of a case which would be sent to her from my banker's. Bluebell, you were very unhappy last year when I found out that Christian's diamonds were really inalienable heirlooms, and would not let you give her yours in exchange. Am I wrong in thinking that those diamonds are the present that you would rather give Christian than anything else? Bluebell!—child!—why are you crying so?" and he drew her fondly towards him.

It was some moments before she could speak; his angry refusal respecting those very diamonds had been a blow to her such as he little guessed, and now to find that without a word from her he had suggested doing the very thing which of all others she wished, gave the finishing touch to her happiness, and made her feel as if all her sorrowful experiences had been but a troubled dream—as if she had awoke to find once more the perfect husband of her early married life. Lindsay was well pleased, though she gave him no answer: her hand sought his, and an eloquent glance said more than words. Christian accepted the diamonds with far more pleasure at the change which their spontaneous gift argued in Lindsay's disposition, and the consequent promise of happiness for Hyacinth, than at the possession of the jewels themselves.

The wedding was very quiet, no one being present but the Tynedales and the old family lawyer to see the bride in her simple white muslin and wreath of real orange-blossoms; but few more gorgeous displays promise more real happiness. After a fond adieu between the sisters, Mr. and Mrs. Courtray started for San Remo, their first halting-place on their way to Florence; and in a few days Sir Lindsay and Lady Ettrick were to set forth on their return to England.

It was the last evening before their departure that, as they sat watching the sun casting his setting glory over the purple sea, Lindsay pressed a kiss on his wife's lips as he murmured, "My own Hyacinth, no more misunderstandings between us any more forever;" and with moistened eyes, but a happy smile, she whispered,—

"Your own Hyacinth forever, but never 'Wild Hyacinth' any more."

THE END.

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